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ABSTRACT

This report presents the overall quality assurance framework for initial vocational education in Denmark and the Netherlands and 10 case studies on quality assurance initiatives at Dutch and Danish vocational colleges. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the policy context on quality. Chapter 2 views the quality debate from the perspective of the decentralization or deregulation of vocational education and training (VET) policies (from the government's point of view) and greater autonomy for colleges (from the school's point of view) during recent years. A general conceptual framework is offered for the description of the policy context, quality programs, and case studies. Chapter 3 describes the policy context of initial vocational education at the secondary level within which the quality initiatives of the vocational colleges are taking place. The Danish and the Dutch policy contexts are described separately, followed by a comparison between the countries that highlights similarities and differences in the contexts and programs of quality assurance. Chapter 4 presents 10 case studies describing and discussing the different ways chosen by Dutch or Danish vocational colleges to improve quality. Four case studies emphasize quality activities based on a program of external quality assurance; six place emphasis on fully inhouse quality systems and programs. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the implementation of school-based quality concepts in the two countries. Appendixes contain 17 references and background information about the national systems of VET. (YLB)

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Quality debate in initial vocational education

School-based quality measures at intermediate level: a Danish-Dutch comparison

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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Quality debate in initial vocational education

School-based quality measures at intermediate level:
a Danish-Dutch comparison

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PREFACE

This report is one of the series of studies elaborated within the context of CEDEFOP's project on quality in vocational training.

In conformity with the European Council Resolution of 5 December 1994 on the quality and attractiveness of the VET, CEDEFOP has commissioned and is currently commissioning studies on some key aspects of the debate on quality at European level.

It should be clear that the Centre is working both on quality assurance and quality assessment issues.

Quality being a multi-dimensional and relative concept, CEDEFOP has started its works on it with a synthesis of ideas and experiences in seven EU Member States complemented by additional information. This publication of "Quality issues and trends in vocational education and training in Europe" is currently available in English, German, Spanish and French.

Based on discussions with experts in the field, the Centre realised that over the last decades more training institutions and firms were interested in certification of quality assurance mechanisms on the basis of the ISO 9000 standards family.

Thus a report on European experience in the interpretation and implementation of ISO 9000 in education and training environments saw the light. It also provides an in-depth discussion of the interpretation of standards in VET, underlying the advantages and the limits of this mainly procedural approach coming from the industry. This report will be available in English and French.

A third report has been drawn up on one of the main tools for quality assurance and assessment, namely indicators. An overview of the various types of indicators, their scope and implementation with a proposal concerning design methodology for quality indicators is elaborated and it will soon be published in English.

In relation to quality assessment, CEDEFOP has organised jointly with the Greek OAED and the German FHVR-Berlin a conference on "Approaches to the evaluation of European Training, Employment and Human Resource Programmes", aiming to contribute to the definition of priorities so that European Programmes can be more efficiently implemented and evaluation methods improved.

An international and interdisciplinary exchange of views and information on employment policy, vocational training and social-policy aspects of the evaluation of European training, employment and human resource programmes took place during the two days of this conference in Athens.

The interested reader may find the related papers in CEDEFOP's panorama series in English, Greek, Spanish and German.

Following this, CEDEFOP has proceeded to the analysis of the evaluation practices of quality aspects in vocational training programmes. Five countries have been studied and a synthesis report is in preparation. It will be available in English and French.

Concerning exclusively initial vocational education and quality, CEDEFOP has chosen to limit itself to a comparison of school-based quality concepts and practices in two countries which are well-advanced in this field: The Netherlands and Denmark.

Two national reports have been drawn up by Mr Karel Visser of CINOP and Mr Søren P. Nielsen of DEL, supported by Ms Mari van Beer and Mr Reginald van Seters of CINOP and Mr Erik Børrild of DEL. These reports have been merged into the present one on "Quality debate in Initial Vocational Education".

CEDEFOP is particularly happy that this report has been used for and has been enriched by a series of exchange visits between school quality managers in both countries.

After giving an overview of the policy context on quality, the authors present the cases of ten schools which have adopted different and often complementary approaches to quality assurance.

CEDEFOP would like to thank the authors and co-authors for their work and particularly for their efforts in drawing a real comparative analysis between the Dutch and Danish approaches so that this work appeals to a European public.

Tina Bertzeletou
Project manager

Stavros Stavrou
Deputy director

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1. INTRODUCTION

For some years already a substantial number of vocational colleges in Denmark and The Netherlands have been concerned with quality development, measurement and methodology. This can be seen as a natural reflection of the general concern for quality and competitiveness in society as a whole. Activities directed at quality assessment started long ago in industry, but today widespread management activities within different sectors of public services can also be observed. One of these sectors is vocational education (and training).

Generally speaking, the growing amount of attention being paid to quality in vocational education and training is based on the conviction that only a highly educated (professional) population will be able to deal effectively with the enormous, complex issues of this day and age and with the associated social, economic and technological developments.

More specifically, concern about the quality of vocational education and training increases as a result of (1) changing views of the management methods of colleges and training organisations and (2) having to comply with a variety of educational and training needs of a highly heterogeneous population claiming and/or utilising what is offered on the vocational education and training market.

It is important to distinguish between (1) initial vocational education (higher and secondary level), which is usually funded by the government, and (2) the training market for continuing vocational training. In the first case, an educational organisation is usually a subsidised organisation, entrusted by the government to provide students and future professionals with qualifications, ile in the second case, the training organisation can be classified as a market organisation whose success is determined by market forces and (potential) customers. In this report we focus on initial vocational education at secondary level.

In Denmark many vocational colleges have on their own initiative – and in particular since 1991 in connection with sweeping reform of the Danish vocational education system – established projects aiming to develop their own methods and systems for quality assessment and quality development. Often such projects have been co-funded by the Ministry of Education within the framework of a programme for research and development in the vocational sector of the educational system. This programme has for years had a strand intended to support quality and management projects at the school level. Since 1991, more than 100 school projects have been subsidised by the ministry.

The Ministry of Education has recently published a plan and a strategy called "A strategy for a systematic quality development and assessment of results within the sector of vocational education" (1995). The plan seeks to establish a framework for future quality activities in the VET sector in the so-called EUD-system consisting of 137 vocational colleges offering ninety different vocational courses.

In The Netherlands many vocational colleges have also established projects in the field of quality assurance over recent years. These projects anticipated the reform of the Dutch system of vocational education at secondary level and of general adult education, which culminated in new legislation. In the new law concerning these sectors of education, which came into effect on 1 January 1996, there is considerable emphasis placed on internal and external quality assurance. The law provides a framework for different quality activities in the VET sector and in general adult education: in the so-called EB-system,

which in 1997 will consist of about 50 large regional centres for vocational education and general adult education, offering hundreds of courses at different EC levels.

Quality activities can embrace all levels of the system of vocational education and training:

- the micro level: the level at which teaching and learning are given shape;
- the intermediate level: the institutional/college level;
- the macro level: the level of education as a system in society, including the different boards, councils and committees where employer and employee representatives – among others – have their role to play.

In this report the focus is placed on the meso level. The aim is to present the overall quality assurance framework for initial vocational education in the two countries and ten case studies on quality assurance initiatives at Dutch and Danish vocational colleges.

The following issues will be dealt with in this report:

In chapter 2 the quality debate is seen from the perspective of the decentralisation and/or deregulation of VET policies (from the government's point of view) and greater autonomy for colleges (from the school's point of view) during recent years; the term 'deregulation' is used here in a political/administrative sense. This chapter offers a general framework for the description of the policy context, the quality programmes and the case studies in each of the two countries.

Chapter 3 describes the policy context of initial vocational education at secondary level within which the quality initiatives of the vocational colleges are taking place. The Danish and the Dutch policy contexts are described separately, followed by a comparison between Denmark and The Netherlands highlighting the similarities and differences in the contexts and programmes of quality assurance. Background information about the national systems of vocational education and training can be found in an annex to the report.

Chapter 4 presents a number of case studies describing and discussing the different ways chosen by Dutch or Danish vocational colleges to improve quality. Four case studies emphasize the quality activities of colleges which are (partly) based on a programme of external quality assurance, while the other six cases place the emphasis on fully internal, college-based concepts of quality assurance. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the implementation of school-based quality concepts and programmes in the two countries.

2. AUTONOMY, DEREGULATION AND QUALITY: GENERAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers::

a. *the objectives of the vocational education and training system which function as a policy framework and constitute a general standard against which quality must be measured; in other words, objectives become the benchmark of quality. Needless to say, policies – especially at national level – reflect the governmental, not the societal, philosophy of education, training, citizenship and development.*

b. *the process of deregulation (as a political/administrative term from the government's point of view) leading to greater autonomy for organizations in the education and training sector. This process, which emphasizes the organisation's greater leeway, flexibility and self-regulation, results in a broader approach to quality stressing the returns of education and training.*

c. *the quality concept itself: definitions and dimensions; approaches and functions.*

This chapter is not directly specific to the Dutch or the Danish situations; it is conceptual in nature. In the following chapters this conceptual framework will be used as a shelf for a detailed description and comparison of the quality context and quality programmes in the field of VET in both countries.

2.2 Objectives of vocational education and training

In Denmark, as in The Netherlands, the objectives of initial vocational education and training at secondary level are laid down in policy statements and in legislation. This means that the system of vocational education and training will:

1. motivate young people to train and ensure that all young people who want vocational training have genuine opportunities to obtain it and to choose from a number of training schemes (or programmes);
2. give young people and adults training which provides a basis for future working life and contributes to their personal development and to their understanding of society and its development;
3. satisfy the needs of the labour market for the occupational and general qualifications required to develop trade and industry, including the development of trade and industry, labour market conditions, workplace organization and technology;
4. provide training that will serve as a basis for further training. The systems of vocational education and training of Denmark and The Netherlands which have these qualifying functions and these objectives are described concisely in Annex 1.

2.3 Autonomy and deregulation

2.3.1 General political background

During the eighties the amount of centralization in government education (and training) policy in various European countries came in for severe criticism. One of the most obvious changes stemming from this critical approach is the trend towards greater autonomy

for individual educational organisations. This trend was reflected for instance in new legislation on higher education and on vocational education at intermediate level: government deregulation resulting in greater self-regulation by educational organisations, so that the state education sector, and in particular vocational education and training, becomes more competitive, effective and responsive, and efficient. Since 1991 this trend, with a corresponding reform of the Danish initial vocational education and training, was enacted through two new acts; in The Netherlands this trend culminated in new legislation on general adult education and initial vocational education, which came into force on 1 January 1996.

There are a number of reasons for emphasising the greater autonomy of education and training centres (Visser, 1995).

- Reasons of an educational nature: the institution has greater leeway and is more flexible when it comes to meeting the diversity of educational and training needs and strengthening the responsiveness of the VET system. In The Netherlands this greater autonomy is linked to a process of increases in scale (mergers between schools in order to be able to supply a broad range of demands); that is not the case in Denmark.
- Reasons of a political and social nature: optimising the influence of the various interested parties in education and training programmes, including the influence of the social partners (government, labour unions and employer organisations) and local authorities. This desired optimisation results in pro-active school environments, thereby increasing the complexity of the pattern of managerial relationships.
- Reasons of a financial nature: setting tighter priorities, which, to a certain extent, is linked to the political debate on the government's core activities.

The reduction or simplification of legislation by central government forces educational organisations to become more self-regulating; control focuses less on intentions and more on results, performance, and the returns on education. This introduced the quality debate.

2.3.2 Domains of autonomy

The (partially) greater degrees of freedom for schools are seen in various fields. In as far as secondary vocational education and training is concerned, this is discussed in chapter 3. Here we will confine ourselves to designating those domains where there can be some measure of increased autonomy for schools (Van Wieringen, 1995; 1996).

The following domains are distinguished:

- Environmentally-oriented autonomy: for whom does the school wish to work?
- Normative autonomy: what is the school's mission, which normative pedagogic framework does the school wish to apply?
- Educational autonomy – product-related: which decisions regarding educational goals can be taken by the school?
- Educational autonomy – process-related: which decisions regarding the educational structure of the educational (learning) processes can be taken by the school?
- Managerial and organisational autonomy;
- Financial autonomy;
- Autonomy with regard to working conditions: this concerns the legal position, working conditions and quality of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

2.4 Quality

In this paragraph consideration is given to the following:

a. *definitions of quality and dimensions for quality indicators*

b. *main approaches to quality assurance: internal versus external*

c. *functions of (external) quality assurance*

2.4.1 Definitions and dimensions

The quality of education and training can be examined from different angles. A Dutch policy document distinguishes for instances five quality aspects: (1) the objectives or functions of education, (2) the content, (3) the processes, (4) the effects, and (5) the preconditions or resources. Such an approach assumes a broad definition of the term 'quality'. An approach, however, based on a more narrow definition of this term is derived from the effective school movement: ultimately, quality should be demonstrated by results, by educational returns in terms of what the students have gained from their education.

Such different approaches show that there is no one clear definition of 'quality' in education and training. Moreover, quality often seems to be defined in indefinite and relative terms, as for instance: "Quality is to do what you are supposed to do; and to do it to the best of your ability. The only valid definition is the one you yourself lay down by the way in which you decide to behave when you are the producer" (unpublished paper in Denmark about the approach to quality in the VET-sector).

Quality in education must be related to the values, aims and objectives of three user groups: pupils/students, labour market purchasers, and society in general. These groups often have different expectations and aims. Thus an overall coherent concept of quality can only refer to the objectives which have been laid down for each educational field and each educational course. These political objectives for (initial) vocational education (and training) are described in paragraph 2.2

Whether quality objectives have been achieved should be tested on at least four dimensions which constitute the main criteria and quality indicators. These four dimensions are:

1. input: the qualifications and motivation of those admitted and the resources provided by the training institutions;
2. process: the aim, structure and content of the course, the planning and execution of teaching, the physical framework, the teachers, the learning environment, and the management of training institutions;
3. product: passed examinations, school leavers' vocational, personal and general competences, course completion and drop-out rates;
4. effect: employment, productivity, innovative capacity, competitiveness, societal engagement and personal "joie de vivre" as well as intellectual resources.

By mentioning these four dimensions and corresponding quality indicators, this brochure will be based on an approach with a broad definition of quality assurance. So quality assurance in education and training at the intermediate level, i.e. school-related quality assurance, concerns all aspects of the school organization which contribute to the achievement of quality goals. Ideally speaking, it is integrated in the school's organization.

The definition of quality assurance, used in this brochure is: quality assurance can be regarded as the whole range of activities intended to integrate and control factors that influence the output and outcomes in such a way that the envisaged quality output is permanently guaranteed. This definition comprises both quality maintenance and permanent quality improvement.

2.4.2 Approaches: internal and external quality assurance

The difference between internal and external quality assurance can be important in education and training.

- Internal: this is a systematic range of activities developed by the educational organisation with a view to quality assurance and quality improvement. Two simple questions are central to this issue: (a) Are we, as an educational organisation, doing things right? and (b) Are we, as an educational organisation, doing the right things? A good internal quality-care system uses a goal-oriented and a results-oriented approach which are documented in quality reports, and the like.
- External: these are activities carried out by outsiders (from the school's point of view), with the aim of guaranteeing and/or improving the quality of education. Examples include the role of the Inspectorate, visiting committees, awarding bodies and examination boards, standardised tests, and so on.

This distinction between internal and external quality assurance is applied in chapter 4, where different cases are described: some with an emphasis on the internal side of quality assurance and improvement; some with an emphasis on the external side.

Ideally speaking, internal quality assurance should be regarded as a precondition for external quality assurance. Some educationalists are of the opinion that the objective of external quality assurance is to determine whether an educational organisation implements a sufficiently effective internal quality assurance system. And this latter system can be seen as a normal condition for schools and colleges which are to a large extent autonomous and have many degrees of freedom.

The fundamental questions 'which possible goals are served by a system of external quality assurance and quality improvement' and 'with which criteria should such a quality programme comply', are therefore also significant.

Liket (1992) distinguishes five possible functions of external quality assurance, i.e.,

a. the validation function: this is often important in the development of new vocational education programmes;
b. the mirroring function towards the school organisation;
c. the transfer function: certain developments noted in a vocational education and training centre or school can be of great value to others;
d. the innovation function: the initiating of improvements / changes in the educational organisation as a result of feedback generated by the external evaluation;
e. the policy preparing and policy supporting function: arriving at more well-founded decisions as a result of external evaluations of the functioning of the school organisation.

The relative importance of each of these functions cannot be defined in advance. It depends (1) on the scope and object of the external evaluation and (2) on the school's freedom to take fully independent decisions. The greater the (relative) autonomy of the school, the greater the significance of these functions in the educational organisation.

The criteria for a good system of external quality assurance and quality improvement have been laid down, for instance, for The Netherlands (Liket, 1992). These generalized criteria are:

- an external quality programme for a type of education or school assumes an educational or school-related programme of internal quality assurance;
- an external quality programme covers every contingency: i.e. that every aspect of an education/discipline or an educational organisation is subjected to quality audits;
- an external quality programme includes regular measurements which are repeated from time to time;
- an external quality programme is transparent: this transparency is expressed in clear agreements on procedures and in the clarity of the quality indicators to which the organisation has committed itself;
- the results of an external audit are documented in a public report which is made available to those immediately involved and to interested public parties, so that there can then be a debate on optimizing sections of education and the organisations that operate within it.

2.5 Conceptual framework: an aid to analysis

The conceptual framework presented will be used to describe the functioning of quality programmes in vocational education and training in The Netherlands and in Denmark; the framework does not only function as an aid to analysis, but also for comparative remarks.

3. QUALITY PROGRAMMES AND CONTEXTS FOR QUALITY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter considers:

- *the policy context in both countries, in which quality programmes in vocational education and training are introduced;*
- *the legal arrangements for the degrees of freedom for schools and colleges using the framework presented in paragraph 2.3.2; and*
- *the quality programmes for initial vocational education at the intermediate level in both countries with an emphasis on their elements and implementation.*

Paragraph 3.2 describes the Danish situation. Paragraph 3.3 the situation in The Netherlands; the quality programme for higher vocational education will also be discussed briefly as this programme is very instructive.

In paragraph 3.4 the similarities and differences between the two countries are summed up. This paragraph can be regarded as a first step towards chapter 5, in which general findings, remarks and conclusions are presented.

3.2 Situation in Denmark

3.2.1 Policy context

Since 1989 the quality policy of the Department of Vocational Education and Training (MoE) has gone through different phases. The focus in 1989-91 was on structural reform of the overall VET steering, management and financing system, while in the period from 1991-95 the focus shifted to one of experimentation through stimulus and financial support of a vast number of decentralized and very different school quality projects. And now in 1995-96 a new systematic quality programme is in the process of being hammered out by the Ministry of Education.

In the late eighties new policies were introduced in the public sector designed to make the sector more competitive, efficient and effective. Education, and vocational education and training in particular, has been one of the targets for these changes, which sought to decentralise the control and decision-making process. It was realised that centralised control of VET was hindering the ability of colleges to respond rapidly to changes in the labour market stemming from the introduction of new technology, increasing international competition and new ways of organising production.

The radical reform of the VET system through the Training Act of 1989 (implemented from 1 January 1991), introduced totally new steering principles into public administration involving deregulation, decentralisation, greater autonomy for local institutions and more emphasis was placed on market allocation instead of state allocation of resources.

Thus, from 1991 a new funding regime was introduced, VET curricula were simplified, students were allowed a free choice of college, and the roles of School Boards were strengthened. The VET reform brought fundamental changes to the relationship between colleges (more competition), the financial management of colleges (student-based but

untied grants), and further decentralization (e.g. colleges can decide to offer new VET courses without prior approval from the MoE).

With the VET reform, the Ministry of Education's instruments of management were markedly changed, from detailed management and regulation to a principle based on far-reaching steering by targets and frameworks (management-by-objectives). The same is true of financial management, and for the curricula of VET courses. Control by the Ministry of Education has been confined to laying down general rules on VET courses in co-operation with the Vocational Training Council and formulating general directives for the different, individual VET courses in accordance with the sectorial Trade Committees. Detailed syllabuses, laid down centrally, have thus been discarded completely.

The reform of the VET management system is thus important for understanding the development of quality in the VET field. The assurance of quality must take place in an interplay between centrally defined targets and frameworks and local dispositions.

In the Danish educational system management by targets and frameworks has been implemented in all areas through radical reform of the responsibilities of actors and financing mechanisms, particularly in vocational education and training.

This reform is based on the belief that quality and efficiency are best improved by giving colleges more freedom in educational and financial decision-making. The introduction of market principles combined with a free choice of school imply more competition between colleges, which have to attract students to get public funding; incentives to improve quality are thus built into the new decentralised system.

But this management system is an "ideal type", a model based on conditions which often do not exist in a given educational area. Free school choice is a chimera if the demand for a course is much greater than capacity or if a course is only provided by one college in the country. On the other hand, totally free admission to courses would be very expensive requiring spare capacity in colleges; and quality might be impaired by too many colleges offering all types of courses.

The new division of labour between the central and the decentral levels has meant far-reaching decentralization. This structure has been underpinned by a number of central monitoring and steering mechanisms to assure the quality of the teaching process and the educational product. The revamped structure has been criticized, (Uddannelse og kvalitet, 1995); it needs to be supported by clear and systematic quality audits and evaluations of results. The new Quality Strategy Plan of the Ministry of Education is partly a response to this need.

Another central structural instrument of quality assurance in Danish vocational education and training is the prominent and influential role of the social partners. To make the VET system more dynamic the 1991 reform was deliberately based on the creation of self-regulating mechanisms: employers need as highly-qualified workers as possible and employees organisations want to raise the level of the workforce, thus contributing to a better negotiating position and to securing employment.

This system has turned out to be very efficient, and it guarantees that the organisations representing the interests of companies and workers are deeply involved in the running of the VET system – on the input-, process- and output-sides of the system. The need for independent, external quality monitoring is considerably reduced in the Danish VET and CVT systems by the presence of the users at all levels of influence.

A number of factors contribute to quality assurance on the process side of VET courses.

To secure the relevance and quality of courses in relation to the labour market, the social partners are structurally placed in a strong position to achieve quality objectives, at the central level as well as at the school level.

Another very important factor contributing to the permanent development of quality in Danish vocational education and training is the centrally stimulated, but locally developed pedagogical innovation and development work. In all the Nordic countries there is a strong tradition of grass-root development work at school level; for such activities approximately DKK 50 m. are spent each year in the VET system by the Ministry of Education in Denmark. A characteristic feature of the Danish educational tradition is the belief that state investment in and support of local experimentation in schools and among groups of teachers are the most promising way of developing the educational system. The main emphasis is on the input stage through the nurturing of many pilot projects and local R&D activities.

For some years the Ministry of Education and the vocational colleges have focused on quality in education. Many colleges have started development projects with the aim of creating their own methods and tools for quality assurance and development. Since the structural reforms of 1991 the MoE, Department of Vocational Education and Training, has financially supported more than 100 such school-based quality projects containing a variety of aims.

3.2.2 Degrees of freedom for schools: the legal context

In paragraph 2.3.2 seven domains of autonomy were distinguished (Van Wieringen, 1996). These are used here to provide insight into the extent of the autonomy (or political leeway) granted by legislation to schools for vocational education and training.

A. Environmentally-oriented autonomy

Since January 1991, the Danish vocational training system has changed markedly. The VET reform was enacted through two new acts, the Act on vocational schools (Act 210, 1989) and the Act on vocational training (Act 211, 1989); the reason why a separate act on vocational schools was established as an integral part of the VET reform was to underscore the fact that vocational schools have a broader field of activity than just to deliver basic vocational training courses. Act 210 established a new management system for vocational schools. Its overall ambition was to give the schools more freedom to make the best of their resources within a centrally-defined framework, including a total untied grant, with a view to enabling them to attain the aims which have been laid down at central level. Vocational schools in Denmark are organised as private and independent (non-profit) institutions, and this was underlined and supported by the new school law.

Vocational schools in Denmark offer educational programmes

- which are recognised by the Minister of Education, advised by the Council for Vocational Education, and drawn up by representatives of the social partners. The latter point guarantees the labour-market relevance and responsiveness of vocational education. With few exceptions, it is now up to the individual schools themselves to decide which courses and how many study places they want to offer;
- which can be characterised as being commercial contract activities within continuing vocational training. These contract activities can be carried out as Open Education (the Ministry of Education), AMU courses (the Ministry of Labour) or CVT courses delivered directly to public and private companies, the first two of which require that the schools have been approved to offer these courses. Courses delivered directly to companies are not subject to those restrictions.

- and which the School Board defines as relevant in order to support the local and regional needs of those seeking education and training and the needs of companies. In special cases, the Ministry of Education can require the school to offer specific VET courses.

B. Normative autonomy

Vocational schools are free to determine their own direction or ideological "hue". The subject-structure created by the 1989 reform consists of different types of subjects, of which 1/6 of the curriculum is devoted to optional subjects decided by the individual school. Schools are free to offer a number of programmes within this range: education catering for the students' interests; subjects which are important for admission to continuing and further education; subjects offered with a view to qualification requirements and employment opportunities within the local area; remedial programmes, and so on. The school's mission is also expressed in these programmes: the values the school regards as being important, which will often be directly linked to the school's own definition of quality.

C. Educational, product-related autonomy

The VET reform meant an increase in the freedom of vocational schools to decide how to organise teaching with a view to attaining educational targets within the given financial framework. In order to achieve this, all central regulations regarding class sizes etc. have been abolished, and the regulations regarding the number of students' lessons modified so that greater or smaller deviations can now be decided on by the school.

The school determines which programmes it will offer from the overall structure of basic vocational courses defined by the Ministry of Education. The school must be approved by the Ministry of Education to offer a given vocational course; but the school is free to offer one extra vocational course within the overall programme which must be approved by the minister at the latest two years after being introduced. Commercial and private organisations can also (in principle) provide vocational courses within the official programme.

Each school must draw up an education and examination plan; the government regards this to be an important document for the purpose of quality assurance. Assessment is based on continuous assessment and/or examinations set by the teachers with a final examination or a trade test. General (subjects) education is assessed on the basis of course work and final examinations. The Ministry of Education sets the final examinations and decides each year which subjects will be externally assessed. Vocational subjects are assessed and given marks internally. The final stage in vocational qualifications is the "journeyman" test, or the production of a "masterpiece". This is assessed by two trade union representatives and two employers from the appropriate Trade Committee.

D. Educational, process-related autonomy

Although schools have acquired a high degree of autonomy in the compilation of their individual educational programmes and the way they shape their educational offers, there are some restrictions on schools' autonomy within this domain.

Each course is regulated by an educational regulation stipulating the aims, objectives and broad frameworks of each vocational course. The structure of vocational education and training courses is based upon the alternance training principle, i.e. relatively brief theoretical education alternating with practical work experience (on-the-job training) in a company. VET courses are normally not longer than four years, with theoretical school-part education not exceeding 80 weeks. The individual Trade Committees decide

on the detailed structure and modes of alternance between school and in-company training.

The general curricular framework for VET is drawn up by the Ministry of Education. Such curricula generally comprise basic (one third), area (one third), specialised (one sixth) and optional (one sixth) subjects. Syllabuses are drawn up locally in schools. Standards for vocational courses are set by the Council for Educational Training and approved and enforced by the government. Vocational curricula are determined by the Trade Committee with equal representation from appropriate employee and employer organisations. The detailed work of writing the curricula is carried out by practising vocational teachers who teach and practise in schools.

On-the-job training takes place within one or more companies which have been approved by the relevant Trade Committee as being appropriate for practical work experience in the course concerned. Alternance training requires a training contract between trainee and company. This contract covers all aspects of training, on-the-job training periods, theoretical education periods and final examinations. The training contract is a formal document and must be drawn up on a special form approved by the Minister. Schools and companies are obliged to exchange information which is of benefit to the trainee's education. The Trade Committee is responsible for ensuring that trainees receive good, all-round training. In Denmark, there are no formal requirements for instructors providing on-the-job instruction in companies. Practical training within the company takes the form of instruction by the company's master craftsmen.

It should be stressed that the heavy involvement of the social partners in the Danish dual system is an important quality-assessment parameter. Another in-built quality parameter is the fact that a tenure (a contract) with a company is required to complete a course. The employer will, before signing a contract with an apprentice, assess whether the trainee will be able to complete the course, including create value for money – the apprenticeship wage is a part of the employment contract. It should be underlined that this is an extremely efficient quality parameter built into the Danish VET system.

E. Managerial and organisational autonomy

Act 210 of 5 April 1989 on vocational schools established a new management system for vocational schools. A number of functions were decentralised to the school level. The individual school has the right and the duty to deal with most financial and training matters itself, and the school's Board, together with the school principal, now has increased powers. In general, vocational schools are relatively autonomous with regard to management and organisation.

The Board is the top management body of the school and administers block grants provided by the government. The Board takes decisions, in collaboration with local interests, on the vocational training courses, continuing training, etc., which the school wishes to offer. Together with the school principal, the Board is also responsible for arranging the details of training, although major responsibility lies with the Local Education and Training Committees. The Board is composed of 6 to 12 members, one of which is appointed by the county council and at least one by the municipal councils. The social partners must be equally represented. Teachers and administrative personnel are each represented by one representative with no vote, while the students are represented by two representatives who are also not entitled to vote.

The main function of the Local Education and Training Committees is to assist the schools in planning contents of the courses given. They also provide advice in all matters concerning training at the school, and help strengthen contacts between the school and the local labour market. One or more local committees are appointed for each school to

cover the courses offered. The majority in any committee must be made up of representatives of the organisations which have a seat on the particular Trade Committee concerned.

F. Financial autonomy

Schools receive a lump sum which they are free to spend as they wish on all costs incurred in providing education. Activities are funded by the so-called "taximeter" funding system for vocational schools which has two elements. One relates to expenses incurred in teaching and embraces the salaries of teachers and support staff, teaching materials and equipment. The second comprises the expenses relating to rent and mortgage payments, the operation of buildings, management, administration and other miscellaneous expenses. The grants are not earmarked and colleges are free to allocate resources as they think fit. All educational activities are placed in one of six taximeter groups which attract funding per full-time equivalent student of between DKK 20,000 and DKK 55,000 per year.

Both ministry officials and school principals/school boards recognise that the critical test for the new funding regime will come during the next few years when the demographic downturn in the 16-20 year old age group will cause intense competition for students.

G. Autonomy with regard to working conditions

A school's freedom to determine its own personnel policy is still restricted, but has been widened since 1991. The rules regarding teachers' working hours, which are laid down through central negotiations, have been made more flexible, so that the school has now more freedom in how to utilize the working hours of the individual teacher and are in a better position to respond flexibly to the educational needs of the business community and manpower services. The restrictions appear in the setting of qualification requirements of the teaching staff (central regulation) and in the quasi civil servant status of teachers.

3.2.3 Quality programme: elements and implementation .

Quality issues and initiatives are of course not only relevant at the school level, but must involve all levels of the educational system. In August 1995 the MoE, Department of Vocational Education and Training (ESA), presented a systematic quality strategy plan, based on results gathered over the last years of school experimentation.

In a summing-up paper from ESA, 'Q-udvikling – Q-sikring – Q-politik' (Dec. 1993), experiences gained from the school quality projects are discussed. From the Ministry's point of view, the conceptualisation of quality in education must of necessity depend on the basic choice of values. The quality debate, consequently, is first and foremost a debate about values. The individual vocational college must be free to choose its own concept of quality and its own quality indicators, based on the values and the culture of each school. As a result of this philosophy, the concept of quality will be defined differently from school to school.

A number of school quality projects have had the ambition of obtaining an ISO 9000 certification, but the MoE argues against such certification of quality control systems in relation to the ordinary VET and CVT courses.

The Ministry of Education's interest in supporting the many school quality projects was originally motivated by a desire to test the applicability of the ISO 9000 concept as a standard in VET activities. As a result of the development work of recent years, the Ministry has now concluded that vocational colleges will not try to establish an externally-

certified quality control system for the ordinary VET courses which account for 80% of the activities. Such quality tools might well be used in income-covered activities.

According to the Department of Vocational Education and Training, teaching and learning will not be supported or developed and the system will not become dynamic enough if the straight-jacket of a relatively static and bureaucratic quality-management system is imposed on teaching.

Instead, emphasis will from now on be placed on a diversity of approaches to experimentation and pilot projects aiming at quality development in schools – under the new umbrella formulated by the MoE as its overall systematic quality action plan.

A. The 1995 national VET Quality strategy

The Ministry of Education has recently published its 'Strategy Plan for Systematic Quality Development and Effect Assessment in the Vocational School Sector' (30 August 1995, ESA). This programme, which forms the policy context in Denmark, takes as its point of departure the results obtained from the many experimental and innovatory projects undertaken by a number of vocational colleges since 1991.

The programme constitutes the Ministry's framework plan for further work in the coming years, from the school level to tripartite co-operation with the social partners at different levels, and also involving the Ministry itself.

The strategy plan is a systematic approach in the sense that in principle the plan covers all fields of activity deemed to be relevant to achieve higher levels of quality; it is also a coherent plan in so far as it integrates most of the existing tools used in the management of vocational education and training.

The strategy takes as its point of departure the fact that the VET system is in a state of rolling or continuous reform and that we have to find new approaches so that we can make an 'instant evaluation'. This implies that quality is not to certify that your performance meets standards set in the past; but that quality relates to your effort to catch and to be in accordance with highly pressing needs – or even better: to relate yourself to anticipations and forecasts. An approach able to cope with such challenges is viable only if based on the principle of self-assessment at all levels in relation to responsibilities and powers. Each actor has to adopt for himself criteria for and indications of quality.

This is the basic philosophy of the Danish VET Q-strategy.

The programme contains 8 fundamental elements – some of which already exist or are being developed – which in combination will give a strong impetus to the development of quality.

The elements are as follows:

a. the vocational schools' continuous, internal search for quality development and self-assessment of their own activities based on systematized methods and tools, including surveys of students' examination results, evaluation reports by (external) examiners, surveys of user satisfaction, etc. To support this principle of self-assessment a common framework of 'questions' will be developed at the ministerial level. This element is the real backbone of the quality strategy.

b. educational statistics, including balance sheets, statistics on recruitment and completion rates, LOP-(apprenticeship contracts) and career-statistics, etc.

c. a systematic management information system, based inter alia on the statistics mentioned above.

d. supplementary quality criteria/indicators and other quality tools, relating to the different educational legislative areas with their differing aims, objectives and target groups. Such additional guidelines and other material concerning e.g. planning of teaching will occasionally be required in order to further new priorities or to remedy existing problems in the field.

e. supervisory visits and guidance by ESA, the Department of Vocational Education and Training, at vocational colleges.

f. experimental education, pilot projects and innovation/ development work.

g. analyses and forecastings, including occasional surveys of specific educational areas as well as evaluation of systems.

h. analyses of accounts, auditing, and cost-benefit.

All these general elements are currently being concretized and operationalized so that the different actors jointly undertake to develop methods and instruments and help define particular objectives and strategies for each area.

It should be noted that although the results of this project will be disseminated to all the vocational colleges (as all development work authorized by the MoE), it will neither prescribe nor serve as an educational order nor have the status of an 'answer book'. Its function will be primarily to provide guidance, support and inspiration – based on the belief that it is neither possible nor desirable to authorize one definite conception of methods, objectives and values in vocational education and training. Goals can be attained in different ways and by different means and methods.

Linked to the first element (the schools' own internal quality assurance), the Strategy Plan has led to a development project with the aim of developing and documenting a coherent set/an instrumentarium of possible quality-development and effect-measurement methods, including practical examples, of relevance for the vocational colleges. The project will build upon the experiences already gained in the school projects. Besides, relevant international experiences with quality assurance measures will be systematically imported and fed into the development process.

A mandate for the work has been formulated (ESA, August 1995) and a project group has been set up. Three assignments have been defined:

- to follow and survey through a cartography study the internal quality efforts made by colleges in order to identify the concepts and methods applied, and to support the college-based development work on quality;
- to develop a set of such concepts and methods and to make the material produced available for ongoing development in colleges;
- to formulate a framework of 'questions' to be used in the self-assessment procedures in colleges.

The last point is the most important one and a pilot project has been started at 12 vocational colleges aimed at developing the concept of 'question' frames by providing an example of the use of such an instrument. Here, the Danish version will be inspired by work already undertaken and experience gained in The Netherlands, Norway and Scotland. What can be accomplished by this project is first and foremost a mapping of the landscape – the areas regarded to be important in relation to the colleges' own internal evaluation and quality development strategies.

In practice, the methods to be applied in the colleges' self-assessment procedures will undoubtedly take the form of a number of questions concerning strategically selected

areas; these questions presuppose that the individual school has formulated a plan and deliberate and systematic methods to remedy needs. In principle, these questions must cover all school activities which are fundamental to assuring quality.

In the ESA Strategy Plan the following indicators are listed concerning the internal quality work of colleges/schools:

1. Strategy development

a. Management instruments:

- strategic management, including school profiling through the supply of courses and services,
- adaptation strategies to changing goals and needs,
- local educational plans and curricular work,
- drawing up of budgets.

b. Educational instruments:

- students' right to be consulted/participation,
- school culture/environment.

c. External contacts:

- co-operation with local education and training committees,
- collaboration with other schools and colleges: locally, regionally and nationally,
- international activities.

2. Resource parameters

a. Allocation:

- planning of supply of courses and services,
- economic management and cash-flow control,
- staff recruiting and policy,
- equipment and physical facilities (including. library/mediatek),
- registration of student throughput, including completion rates.

b. Operational aspects:

- guidance, introduction,
- special educational assistance,
- safety/working environment,
- organisation of examinations,
- LOP-registration and "out-reaching" activities (including educational offers for adults).

c. Innovative and development activities:

- organisation of learning, including differentiation, adaptation to the needs of students, integrated teaching through interdisciplinary learning approaches, etc.,
- human resources policies, including continuing training of teachers,
- innovation of education and development work.

For all these areas criteria (objectives, goals) for good quality will have to be developed as well as indicators (methods) to measure bad or low quality. This task was undertaken during 1996 and is still under way. The results of this specific project will be available to all colleges as possible options for meeting the common obligation to pay attention to the

quality improvements in the institutions. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but to be supportive and function as a guideline.

B. A quality policy for the VET school sector: results so far

By introducing the new "Strategy Plan for Systematic Quality Development and Effect Assessment in the Vocational School Sector"(30 August 1995, ESA), Denmark began a concentrated effort to improve the quality of Danish VET. Obviously, it is too early in the day to comment in detail on the effectiveness of this programme.

But in general, the programme has many positive elements. It focuses on the interplay between centre and colleges: how to achieve quality and efficiency in co-operation between centrally formulated objectives and frameworks and local right of autonomy. It is pragmatic and applies mainly 'soft' instruments in quality assessment. The plan is based on five years of experience gained through experimentation undertaken by vocational colleges and supported by the Ministry, and its main aim is to invite all levels of the system to take part in an ongoing quality dialogue which respects the different values and approaches of the schools. The most important tool will be selfassessment at all levels of the VET system.

Since 1991 around 120 college-based quality projects have been supported by the MoE. Many of these projects are still running, many others have been documented in project reports, and seven projects have so far been of such public importance that they have been published in booklets by the Ministry of Education. Nearly half of Danish vocational colleges have at least some experience of quality systems and development. The activities represent a wide range of methods.

A preliminary and pragmatic attempt can be made to group together the quality concepts which have been or are currently being tried out in the colleges in the following way:

- the ISO 9000 concept,
- The TQM concept,
- The customer-oriented concept,
- The ethic accountancy concept,
- The self-evaluating concept,
- Quality and management by values and involvement of stakeholders,
- Various home-made concepts, such as: evaluation culture, the learning teacher, learning organisation, etc.

In chapter 4 some of these models are presented. It should be noted that an R&D project has just been commissioned by the Ministry of Education to carry out a more indepth and rigorous analysis of all those different variations in local concepts and the way they are implemented in practice.

3.3 Situation in The Netherlands

In this paragraph (3.3.1) brief attention is paid to higher vocational education (leading to qualifications at EC level 5) in The Netherlands; paragraph 3.3.2 emphasizes the initial vocational education and training types which are comparable with the Danish one described in paragraph 3.2

3.3.1 The quality programme in higher vocational education

A. Self-assessment and visitation committees

Since 1988, quality assurance and control, visitation and self-assessment have become standard terminology in the jargon of higher vocational education (hoger beroepsonderwijs; HBO). This type of education is concerned with external sectoral quality assurance, which is an incentive for the internal quality programme within colleges of higher vocational education; a sector refers to different educational programmes which are more or less directly related to a branch of industry or an economic sector.

Sectoral quality assurance aims to achieve insight into the quality of the education and/or the training at these schools by means of an exchange of ideas between visitation committees of external experts and persons involved in a specific discipline at all colleges and it also aims to contribute to quality improvement. These external experts are drawn from the business community and higher education. Experts in the area of the educational design of learning processes are also members of such a visitation committee.

Three instruments are used in the quality programme:

a. self-assessment (zelfevaluatie):

Self-assessment is a systematic analysis and evaluation of an HBO school as regards the quality of one or more courses in a sector. The results are recorded in a report: self-assessment precedes the visitation. The self-assessment report should focus on (1) the five objects which are central to the evaluating visitation round, (2) to the school's own quality assurance system and (3) highlighting strong and weak points in each object to be evaluated in the school.

b. visitation (visitatiestelsel):

Visitation entails regular visits by a committee (visitatiecommissie) to all HBO schools offering certain courses and involves an examination of quality. An evaluation guideline stipulates the five main points on which the committee is to concentrate. These are:

- the objectives. Higher vocational education does not have nationally stipulated general aims; these educational objectives are compiled for each discipline by the school itself, although there is a tendency for colleges of higher vocational education to make joint agreements about the core of the programmes which covers 70% of a field of study or a course;
- students' course history;
- the curriculum;
- the educational organisation, and
- the relationship between the education and training programme and the labour market.

c. reconnaissance (verkenningen):

These studies are carried out when it is found necessary to arrive at a vision of future, desired educational developments in a specific sector or a cluster of disciplines; the studies are carried out by a reconnaissance committee (verkenningscommissie).
The HBO schools are jointly responsible for the organisation of the visitation system. A practical list containing more than three hundred questions has been compiled which can be used by all parties – schools and visitors – in the evaluation.

The role of the Inspectorate for higher (vocational) education is meta-evaluative in nature: it supervises the quality of the visitation reports, the 'handling' of the self-assessment and visitation systems and identifies education and training programmes that give cause for concern.

B. The future of the quality programme

The first visitation cycle of all programmes in higher vocational education was completed in 1995: a second round will be initiated.

The effects of the visitation system include:

a. colleges of higher vocational education take a more systematic approach to internal quality assurance;

b. a debate has been initiated on the desirability of national core/key qualifications for education and training programmes. The initiative lies with the HBO schools themselves;

c. a debate has started on changing the quality assurance system, whereby a clearer distinction is made between the testing or justification function and the improvement function. The sequential elements in a new system could include, according to the Brouwer commission, 1996:

- reconnaissance for a cluster of disciplines: developments on the supply and demand sides are outlined;
- compiling core qualifications which can be tested and regarded as minimum requirements for educational and training programmes;
- accreditation studies in which the minimum quality is tested (related to core qualifications) resulting in sector benchmarks for programmes and a transparent system of education and training provision;
- visitations, primarily geared to quality improvement, which are linked to the internal quality assurance system. The management of colleges of higher vocational education should (possibly) not have to be included as an evaluation subject, as separate management audits would probably be more effective.

The real outcomes of this debate will be clear in 1997.

3.3.2 Senior secondary vocational education

3.3.2.1 Policy context

The adoption of the new Adult Education and Vocational Education Act (WEB: Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs; 31 October 1995) created a separate education sector within The Netherlands education system: the general adult education and the (initial) vocational education sector (de BVE-sector). This sector integrates all forms of initial vocational education (with the exception of higher vocational education) and general adult education as well as the learning paths leading to vocational education programmes which are not part of general secondary education. This new Act stipulates the parameters which are important for restructuring and for the renewal process of secondary vocational education (secundair beroepsonderwijs).

The most important parameters are (Hövels, 1994):

- a (somewhat) reduced role for government and greater involvement of the social partners;

- a structure of qualifications and partial qualifications for which national general aims have been drawn up for the corresponding education and training programmes, but which also offers the individual parties involved the opportunity of adapting the programmes to local/regional requirements;
- alignment and integration of senior secondary vocational education (day-release education) and of the apprenticeship programme into one system while maintaining substantive differentiation and differentiation according to learning paths;
- greater autonomy for the parties involved at local and regional level (regional training centres (ROCs/schools) in particular) coupled to a process of increasing scale and linked to increasing the ability of schools to develop their own policies;
- reinforcing practical learning processes in vocational education programmes, including the guarantee of a minimum of training in practical situations of the vocation in all disciplines.

A number of these aspects are dealt with in greater detail in the following paragraph.

3.3.2.2 Degrees of freedom for schools: the legal context

In Paragraph 2.3.2 seven domains of autonomy were distinguished (Van Wieringen, 1996). These are used here to provide insight into the extent of the autonomy (or policy leeway) granted by legislation to schools for senior secondary vocational education.

A. Environmentally-oriented autonomy

Senior secondary vocational education offers educational programmes

- which (partially) fit into the structure of qualifications/disciplines determined by the Minister of Education and drawn up by representatives of the social partners and education. The latter point guarantees the responsiveness of vocational education;
- which can be characterised to a certain extent as being commercial contract activities within continuing vocational training. These contract activities can be carried out if they are related to the activities for which the school receives public funds. The school's freedom is limited by the fact that it must rely on government funding for at least 51% of its personnel costs;
- and which, finally, must comply with the educational needs of the various target groups. The Act focuses particular attention on those groups which are less inclined to participate in types of adult education and vocational education. In the coming years, the funding system of schools will include incentives which increase the chances of 'difficult' participants entering the system and graduating (see also point F in this paragraph).

B. Normative autonomy

Traditionally, the Constitution provides that a school is free to determine its own direction or ideological 'hue': this also applies to senior secondary vocational education. Schools are free to project their own image on 10-20% of the curriculum. They are free to offer a number of programmes within this range: ideological education; adaptation of vocational education programmes to regional requirements; additional programmes geared to transferring to higher vocational education; remedial programmes, and so on. The school's mission is also expressed in these programmes: the values the school regards as being important, something which is directly related to the school's own definition of 'quality'.

C. Educational, product-related autonomy

The new Adult Education and Vocational Education Act includes a number of regulations which restrict schools' autonomy in initial vocational education: here the government stipulates the quality standards, either with regard to content or with regard to procedures.

The following parameters are important in this domain:

- the presence of a qualification structure and the corresponding structure of VET (vocational education and training) programmes.

  This structure of qualifications and partial qualifications is drawn up by Committees of Education and the Business Community (COBs: Commissies onderwijs-bedrijfsleven) and is supported by national organisations for vocational education and training in the various branches of industry and services (LOBs: landelijke organen beroepsonderwijs). Representatives of the social partners and education draw up this structure for the various branches of industry by using vocational profiles and ministerial guidelines for the development of the educational structure: vocational education at different levels (EC levels I, II, III and IV) and of different nominal durations (one to four years) which can be offered in two learning paths (dual/non-dual). Hereby, the educational and training programmes result in recognisable and accredited professional qualifications.

- compiling and specifying general aims

  The general aims specify the final standard to be achieved by vocational education programmes: these aims are compiled by the committees (COBs) referred to above and are laid down by the Minister. They serve as guidelines for the further development of curricula by the schools.

- assessment and examination

  The school is in charge of testing, examining and accrediting. The government has stipulated that each school draws up an education and examination regulation; the government regards this to be an important document in terms of quality assurance.

  The school has to use an independent examining body (of its choice) to test 51% (half plus 1) of the partial qualifications and/or components of a programme. This is an open procedural regulation which has yet to be worked out in further detail. The national organisations for vocational education and training (LOBs) – which also draw up the qualifications structure – can act as an examining body, although there is or will be competition among awarding bodies on the examination market. This procedural regulation is known as the 'external validation of the examination' (externe legitimering).

- central registration of vocational education programmes

  The school determines which programmes drawn from the qualification structure are offered; the government determines which of the programmes offered qualify for government funding. The government therefore regards itself as being responsible for the macro-effectiveness of the total range of available courses. Commercial and private organisations can also provide courses which suit the qualification structure; these organisations then have to comply with all educational and legal regulations.

D. Educational, process-related autonomy

Although the Adult Education and Vocational Education Act gives schools a high degree of freedom to compile their own programmes with which to shape education, there are certain restrictions on the schools' autonomy within this domain.

Relevant to this are:

- specifying the duration of a course and the study load of components in each document describing the general aims; the percentage of freedom allowed is also laid down for each course.
- establishing a direct link between testing and partial qualifications; the partial qualifications for externally validated examination are determined at national level.
- the scope of the development in the practical execution of the profession (on-the-job learning) has been laid down: 20-60% of the study time is devoted to day-release education and 60% or more is devoted to the dual-learning pathway.
- labour organisations offering on-the-job learning must be registered and accredited; the national organisations for vocational education and training are charged with the educational quality control and quality improvement of the companies involved. This is the third key task of the national organisations for vocational education and training. All three key tasks – (a) development of a qualification structure, (b) external validation of examinations and (c) registration and accreditation of labour organisations offering training on the job, can be regarded as tasks which can be classified under the heading of 'aspects of external quality assessment'.
- students enter into an on-the-job learning contract with (1) the school and (2) the labour organisation. The content of these contracts is laid down by law: this applies in particular to the duration of the contract, agreements on the goals to be achieved and the supervision of the participants.
- the education and examination regulations to be drawn up by the school (see point C. in this paragraph).

E. Managerial and organisational autonomy

Schools for senior secondary vocational education are relatively autonomous with regard to management and organisation. Not much is regulated by law within this domain. Consultations with the Minister take place at national level in which the schools are regarded jointly as partners of this political official. Central regulation within this domain concerns the institutional design of regional education and training centres (ROCs: the components of which should be comprised in an ROC) and the way in which the school facilitates participation.

F. Financial autonomy

The schools receive a lump sum which they are free to spend as they see fit on any costs incurred in providing education; this includes personnel costs, accommodation under their own management, and so on. A new, yet to be determined, system of funding will take the school's performance into account to a greater extent: a mixed model of student input funding (numbers of students) and output funding (the schools' performance).
This performance funding will be limited because:

- such funding could reinforce the selectivity of senior secondary vocational education, whereas the intention is to provide incentives which contribute to optimising the focus on people with low levels of education, the 'difficult' participants; funding will be increased on behalf of these participants.
- the policy objective that each citizen must be able to achieve the basic qualifications for joining the labour market must not be jeopardised by the manner of funding.

G. Autonomy with regard to working conditions

Within this domain the school's freedom to determine its own personnel policy is the central issue. Until recently, this was subject to strict, centralised regulations. The new act also restricts the schools' autonomy. These restrictions appear in:

- the setting of qualification requirements for the teaching staff (central regulations);
- the legal position of the teaching staff. To a certain extent, their legal position is centrally regulated by the government while, on the other hand, the schools have voluntarily accepted certain restrictions in their autonomy by participating in a collective labour agreement.

However, the schools do have more freedom to develop their own policy, which is mainly of value in the execution of contractual work, so that they are able respond flexibly to the educational needs of the business community and manpower services.

3.3.2.3 Quality programme: elements and implementation

A. Elements

Three aspects are of particular importance in senior secondary vocational education:

- regulations in the educational process-related domain in which a direct connection is made with the desired output of education; see Paragraph 3.3.2.2.
- the legal regulation requiring each school to establishes an internal quality assurance system; the school formulates a quality policy with unambiguous standards with which the quality of the education must comply. In addition, the school ensures that, in co-operation with as many other schools as possible, the quality of the education is regularly evaluated; this assessment is carried out by independent experts. As is the case in higher vocational education, a visitation system will be operational within senior secondary vocational education: in higher vocational education this is related to the sectors/training programmes and in senior secondary vocational education this is related to schools, colleges and training centres. The wide range of education and training programmes in senior secondary vocational education would make a method similar to that of higher vocational education unworkable; the presence of a qualifications structure already guarantees the viability of a sectoral approach (branches of industry).

  Every two years, the school draws up a public quality report which is submitted to the Education Inspectorate. This quality report, which is drawn up according to a prescribed format, concerns five elements: (1) details of the methods used in the quality assessment, (2) the organisation of internal and external quality assessment, (3) the results of the regular assessments, (4) the intended policy ensuing from the results, and (5) further resolutions pertaining to the quality assessment.

- the role of the Inspectorate

  The role of the Inspectorate will be altered since the Adult Education and Vocational Education Act envisages the creation of a system which is self-regulating to large extent. The parties immediately involved in education are responsible for the assessment, control and improvement of the quality of their activities. Within a decentralised policy, the supervisory task and role of the Inspectorate shifts from the teaching process to supervision of the teaching results (in a broader sense). The supervision/control at least concerns (1) the schools' compliance with the legal requirements and (2) the schools' implementation of the quality programmes they have drawn up. In addition, the Inspectorate is kept up-to-date on the state of the art in adult education and senior secondary vocational education, also with a view to the general reports on the quality of education which are addressed to the Minister and

the Parliament. To a certain extent, consensus has been reached on the Inspectorate's controlling task, but its evaluating task is less clear. As a provider of funds (customer), the government formulates general quality requirements for schools and examining bodies: these interested parties put these requirements regarding qualification, accessibility, equal opportunities and effectiveness, into operation in their own quality policy.

A possible consequence and/or danger will be that the Inspectorate, which, strictly speaking, is not a customer and therefore may not form a judgement on its own authority, will not be able to escape interpreting these quality requirements and will therefore be working within the framework it has drawn up itself; this is the view held by schools and examining bodies. On the other hand, the Inspectorate is of the opinion that working within its own evaluation framework, which concerns the vocational education and adult education sector as a whole, is nothing new. While such a framework does reflect the Inspectorate's view of the quality criteria of the quality assurance systems, it is not a regulation.

The findings of the Inspectorate can be interpreted as being input for a dialogue between all the parties involved on tightening the overall quality system within the vocational and adult education sector. As the involvement of external experts in the quality assessment of schools becomes more intense, the role played by the Inspectorate and its evaluating task can be reduced.

B. Implementation

In September 1995, the association of schools for senior secondary vocational education started the project 'Quality assessment in vocational and adult education schools'. The project will run for three years. Its objective is to 'develop and implement a functional system of quality assessment in every BVE school'. This project is an extension of activities such as those which were carried out between 1992 and 1995 and co-ordinated by the association of BVE schools (BVE: Beroepsonderwijs en Volwasseneneducatie). The following activities were developed during this period:

- a pilot project involving fourteen schools to achieve quality assessment in which the procedures and instruments of the ISO 9000 series generated important building blocks for the design of a quality programme.
- a pilot project involving a number of schools in which the central issue was the exchange of experiences gained with quality assurance, based on a variety of quality models.
- endeavouring to reach some uniformity in the approach to development by distinguishing fifteen aspects, within the internal quality assurance system and total quality management, which should then be the object of permanent, internal evaluation. One case described in chapter 4 served as an example for this (see paragraph 4.3.2).
- setting up a database for measuring and evaluation instruments, even though this has been used sparingly up to now.
- setting up regional networks in which the association of schools can contribute to increasing the quality awareness at schools though training courses and the provision of information. Almost all schools (80%) that are members of the association now participate in the association's activities, although some only participate as a matter of form in view of the consequences ensuing from Adult Education and Vocational Education Act.

The current project is in line with the Adult Education and Vocational Education Act. This means

a. the continuation of activities carried out by the association of schools which concern the (occasional) support for schools, network development and the perfecting of the database referred to;

b. setting up a model or models for school visitation by external experts; and

c. the provision of information on and assistance in the structure and content of the quality report.

The association of schools presupposes that it will take more than ten years to properly implement a quality assurance system in the BVE sector. Experience gained in higher vocational education appears to confirm this view.

3.4 Comparative remarks on Danish and Dutch quality programmes and contexts of quality

3.4.1 Similarities

The most important similarities between the two countries are:

a. The Danish and the Dutch vocational education and training systems in general have a number of similarities seen from a European perspective. In both countries major restructuring reforms of the VET systems have taken place, sharing the same aims and restructuring orientations. The Danish VET reform was started in 1989 and implemented from 1991, while the Dutch VET reform culminated by the new Adult Education and Vocational Education Act of 31 October 1995.

   In both countries a more withdrawn role of the government and greater involvement of the social partners have taken place. The systems have become more decentralised giving vocational schools more autonomy over economy, courses and pedagogy and increasing the ability of schools to develop their own policies. In both countries the apprenticeship system has been integrated into an overall school-company interplay structure with a strong emphasis on reinforcing practical learning processes.

b. In The Netherlands and Denmark the main objectives of the VET systems are broader than just providing vocational qualification; the objectives of vocational education are to produce occupational skills combined with an education that gives participants general knowledge, personal development and to provide the necessary conditions for taking part in continuing and further education.

c. In both countries the social partners play a role in the steering, renewal and organisation of vocational education; this role is traditionally very strong in Denmark and through the 1995 reform it has been strengthened in The Netherlands, although it is still weaker than in Denmark.

d. The vocational schools have been given much more autonomy by the VET reforms. This autonomy is in both countries selective in the sense that in one domain – educational, product-related autonomy – the required standards have been sharpened through the application of the principle of goal-setting and goal-attainment procedures. In the other domains the schools have got more freedom of manoeuvre in both countries.

e. A common feature in both countries is the interest taken by governments in quality assurance measures as a way to secure the efficient and qualified "production" of

schools in a new setting where the traditional detailed steering principles have been abandoned.

f. A remarkable feature in both countries is the many initiatives taken by schools through a number of pilot projects and experimentation with different approaches to quality assessment. Both the Danish and the Dutch approaches are very much based on the principles of self-evaluation and of finding and developing one's own, individual internal quality programme in accordance with the values of the individual school.

g. In both countries vocational schools are free to do contractual work – continuing vocational training, consultancy work, building up partnerships with local companies, functioning as technology centres in the local community, etc.

3.4.2 Differences

The most important differences between Denmark and The Netherlands are:

a. One important difference between Denmark and The Netherlands is the size of the vocational schools: through a number of mergers Dutch vocational schools have been reduced to about 50 very large schools compared to approx. 120 schools in Denmark and only a marginal trend towards school mergers. It is much easier in the relatively small Danish vocational schools organically to develop a quality assurance system based on the school's own values and preferences. In The Netherlands the merged schools require much attention from management and the establishing of a new school culture, new values and quality assurance systems which might often be seen as implemented from above.

b. In Denmark there has been a stronger tendency for vocational schools to take the initiative themselves and experiment with quality systems, in particular since 1991 when the VET reform was implemented; in The Netherlands the initiative to press on with quality assurance in the vocational schools has come from the government, although the Dutch schools also have been experimenting with different approaches.

c. The legal arrangements are different in the two countries. In The Netherlands it is directly required by the 1995 Act that vocational schools must have a quality assurance system; this requirement is clearly stated although formulated in general terms. The schools are free to formulate their own quality assurance system, but they must have one. In Denmark quality assurance systems are not mentioned in the legislation but can be seen as more and more systematic follow-up initiatives within the whole VET system.

d. There is a difference between the internal/external balance in quality assurance systems. From the very beginning it has been a basic point of departure in The Netherlands that internal systems must be combined with external inspections. This has not been so in Denmark where the need for external control measures of vocational school quality assurance systems has not been an issue, at least until the Ministry of Education presented its quality strategy plan in 1995. The important role of the social partners at all levels of the Danish VET system are an in-built quality assurance measure which might explain the different perspectives on external quality assurance in the two countries.

e. The thinking/conceptualisation of external quality assurance systems has been different from the start in the two countries. In Denmark the inspiration at the beginning of the nineties came very much from the ISO 9000 standard which a number of vocational schools have tried to apply and under which some schools have now been certified. In The Netherlands the inspiration clearly has come from the quality system used in higher education based on writing self-evaluation reports combined with

visiting committees by peer groups. It is interesting that this Dutch evaluation model for higher education is the methodology used by the Danish Evaluation Centre for Higher Education – but not used in vocational education and training.

f. In both countries the roles of the Inspectorate have been weakened as an integral part of the decentralisation measures which were implemented after the VET reforms, mostly so in Denmark up till now. The new role of the Dutch Inspectorate might be described as one of checking whether the schools have installed and do in fact follow their own quality assurance systems, more than looking into quality indicator details.

4. CASE DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter ten cases are presented; they give examples of Dutch and Danish schools working with a quality programme. The ten cases are divided within two categories:

- *cases in which an emphasis is put on external quality assurance: four cases are described; and*
- *cases with the emphasis on fully in-house quality systems and programmes.*

Some cases are more related to continuing vocational training than to initial vocational education; in a minority of the examples it is the case.

4.2 Cases with a strong external component

4.2.1 Quality and ISO 9001 (of all college activities)

Case: Hillerød Technical College (HTC); (DK)

Several vocational colleges have introduced the ISO 9000 standard as a quality management system. Some of them only wanted to be certified for part of their activities (the market-led CVT courses), whereas the Hillerød Technical College has just been through a process where all activities at the college (including all the vocational education programme courses offered by the college, and even the guidance and counselling services as well) have been certified under the ISO 9001 standard.

Hillerød Technical College has around 1600 students, and employees 300 people. A large number of courses are offered at the college, ranging from metalwork to building and construction and catering and service occupations. The key activities of the college are in the field of initial vocational training.

The college started its quality efforts in 1990 with courses on "quality thinking". All employees at HTC were introduced to quality thinking with a range of courses arranged by "Time Manager International" (TMI Quality). The new school management wanted by this initiative to create an awareness of quality thinking and to start a process in which the employee actively becomes engaged in working with quality systems as a tool.

This was followed by a broader project of quality assurance and organisational school development. In 1992 the management of HTC took the decision to initiate a quality assurance process which should lead to the implementation of the ISO 9001 standard, including certification. This standard is an all-round quality system (individuals, buildings, products, etc.). The choice of the ISO 9000 series was based on the argument that this standard provides the skeleton enabling the college to maintain a stable way to adapt to change processes. Besides, the system seemed to be appropriate to a vocational college in the sense that the terminology used here is well-known by many of the users and customers of training products.

The method used to initiate the project was very pragmatic. In 1992, the school management asked two employees to do a preliminary project, based on interviews and participatory observations, to elucidate the conditions for carrying out a quality care project.

The survey undertaken uncovered a number of "grey areas" where competences and responsibilities were not clear – but it also demonstrated a clear staff motivation to change normal working routines. It was recommended that a quality development project be started.

At the strategical level the project got a full approval, and a steering group was formed and made responsible for managing the project. The steering group had two levels: the strategic level (the school leaders), and the operational level: the two employees who had undertaken the survey, the vice-principal of the college and the administrative head of the college. A number of initiative groups would then be appointed by the operational project managers to do the many sub-project studies close to the day-to-day operations performed by the employees.

From the very beginning, it was realized that a tool would be necessary to make it legitimate to "open all cupboards and draw out all the skeletons." As the seemingly most relevant tool, the ISO standard was chosen.

All employees participated in a string of courses which introduced the ISO system and a new organisation plan of the college. Appointed members of staff attended a longer training course to achieve competence as internal auditors. In order to meet the demands of the ISO system the college management was reorganised. A quality manager was appointed and personnel responsible for quality in a given area were appointed in each department of the college. To support the smooth introduction of the new quality care system, six internal auditors were trained.

All employees have been continuously informed through an internal quality newsletter, "K-nyt", published once a month. The heads of department arranged meetings with all employees in their departments, assisted by those responsible for the quality project, where the new procedures and instructions were presented. When a procedure has been presented at such a department meeting, it is binding and must be implemented directly in the department.

On the launch of the quality programme at a plenary meeting at HTC, it was stressed that what was most pressing was to work out a quality assurance system covering the CVT courses provided by the college. The CVT area had been selected because it involved all departments and so signalled the seriousness of the strategy. And at the same time the CVT area is more open to competition than other types of course. As a pilot project the department of mechanical engineering was certified, and at the same time working groups were formed in the other areas of the college. Each single area (the administration, the caretaker, etc.) was asked to write down procedures for every conceivable situation (work assignment, service or function). These many detailed descriptions together form the contents of the quality manual.

When the CVT area had been certified, the college went on with the same procedure in the initial vocational education area, and from January 1996 the college – as the first and only one in Denmark – has received ISO 9001 certification covering all its activities.

The final certification took place when the quality management system had been tested and documented at internal audits. Certification was performed by an accredited consultancy firm, Danish Standard (DS). The certification consists of external audits; all areas of the college are audited, and the certificate is only achieved if it is documented that the system works as described in the quality manuals. To maintain the ISO 9001 certificate, you have to evaluate (audit) the whole system every third year, and let external auditors make spot checks on the system by auditing randomly selected areas every six months.

One of the issues discussed at HTC is the problem of how to secure development under the ISO 9001 standard. To make room for development and change the college has introduced systematic evaluations (normally through questionnaires) in relation to the college´s policies and objectives, the quality management system and the satisfaction of customers. Teaching activities are systematically evaluated and a follow-up procedure has been installed. Complaints from customers are treated as deviations, and corrective actions must be registered in writing. Every six months the development of quality in each department is evaluated, including an evaluation of the management function. As a new activity all employees take part in development talks with their head of department, individually as well as in teams. On the basis of the many reports of ideas for improvement as well as on deviations, the quality manager initiates corrective actions (the error is corrected) and changes procedures and instructions to prevent new errors from occurring. Deviations are followed up through internal audits.

The HTC findings include:

- Although the ISO 9000 system has proved to be expensive and time consuming, the college finds that is has been worth while to implement the standard and to obtain an external certification of the system. It is pointed out that it is important for colleges to make use of the same standards which are used by their customers, be it in the CVT market place or in the alternance-based apprenticeship system.

- One criticism of the ISO 9000 concept has been that this standard does not get to the core of teaching and learning. The core product of HTC has deliberately been defined as teaching – and not "learning". Through establishing procedures of "all the factors existing around the learning processes", including the qualifications of teachers, the ISO 9000 can help to guarantee good conditions for learning processes. But every learning process requires active, individual work by the learner, work that the learner himself/herself must be responsible for.

- The perception of the organisation by the staff becomes more positive, and the management becomes a role model, through first having to structure the organisation. On the other hand and from a critical perspective: the other side of the coin might be the impression that the ISO system is a top-down management tool, relatively bureaucratic and based on control rather than trust.

- The evaluations performed indicate that deviations from procedures are normally remedied and that in fact the same problems never occur again after interventions. But as yet there is a lack of measurable and comparable results to substantiate the overall results of the quality assurance system.

- Great satisfaction with the quality management system has been expressed by the users of the quality documentation material. Order and clarity are experienced in daily operations. Agreements are kept, and normally activities are carried out as promised. The registration of deviations is a much-used instrument in daily operations.

- Complaints from customers/students are now treated much more seriously. The complaint is handled at short notice, treated as a deviation, and the complainant will get an answer promptly. At the same time internal follow-up mechanisms to avoid such deviations may come into force. In this way the organisation becomes more service-oriented, according to the Hillerød Technical College.

- The ISO 9001 standard is only seen as a starting point for improvement. ISO stops the quality improvement cycle from going into the reverse; but the tools/the standard are not seen as a goal in itself.

4.2.2 Quality and the visitation committee

Case: Pascal College; Apeldoorn (NL)

The Pascal College in Apeldoorn is a Christian school for vocational education and training, offering technical, economic/administrative and health-care and welfare training programmes to almost four thousand students. The school was established early in the 1990s after a merger. Further types of co-operation and mergers have been taking place since 1996.

The new school immediately started a quality project in 1992. Even before the merger, the schools had already acquired experience with the accurate recording of some of the results of the education: (1) research into the returns of economic education programmes and (2) research into the students' well-being during the first year of the health-care and welfare education programmes.

These studies resulted in more systematic attention to quality, while simultaneously the Free University of Amsterdam, more or less coincidentally, offered to organise a school visitation. The school took this opportunity and, owing to the lack of a broad-based self-evaluation, the visitation was deemed a 'zero measurement regarding quality'. This was the first time such a quality instrument was used in senior secondary vocational education.

The visitation committee was chaired by a professor and the other members were drawn from the business community and education. To prepare for the two-day visitation in 1992, the committee received and studied a number of documents: a merger report, an innovation plan, the previously mentioned research reports, the school regulations, and, at the request of the committee, a number of study guides, information brochures and work of students who had achieved sufficient/insufficient marks.

The committee also used a checklist of questions/points of attention classified in seven categories. For two days, this information and a frame of reference, which had not been fully specified, were used to question nine panels. These panels consisted of the management and board of directors, middle-management and staff, lecturers in the various units, counsellors, traineeship co-ordinators, and, last but not least, students.

The committee's findings were recorded in a report which was submitted to the school. This analytical report stated that the policy development priority setting and planning could do with a great deal of improvement, which was hardly surprising immediately following a merger, but also that the students attended the school with pleasure and that the school had the potential to contribute to the innovation of education in the school.

A second visitation is being prepared at present and will take place in the course of 1997.

From conversations with school representatives it appeared that:

- the first visitation was not perceived as very threatening and that they had experienced its mirroring function in a positive manner;
- after the visitation, a good start was made in dealing more systematically with quality and innovation and using a planned approach. The 1995-1997 policy plan of the Pascal College makes a direct link between mission (course direction), selected actions and projects;

- there was a need first to define quality themselves, thereby becoming less dependent on the implicit or explicit frame of reference of a committee. In other words, self-evaluation (compare higher vocational education) followed by a visitation. The school should use a quality model to activate a self-correcting mechanism;
- the visitation should be more 'testing'. Is the image presented by the self-evaluation in line with reality?
- the non-teaching personnel should be included more in quality projects as the issue is the quality of the school as an organisation;
- the composition of a visitation committee should be such that all educational units are sufficiently represented. Expertise from various types of schools, various branches of industry and, finally, an authoritative chairman;
- and finally, student polls are a useful instrument with which to gain insight into the participants' different views on schools.

4.2.3 Quality and ISO 9001 (certification of market-led activities)

Case: EUC Syd Technical College; Aabenraa/Sønderborg (DK)

EUC Syd was established on 1 January 1994 through a merger between Aabenraa technical College and Håndværkerskolen in Sønderborg. The college has about 520 employees and around 2000 students taking part in courses spread over six locations, three in Aabenraa and three in Sønderborg. Besides the ordinary VET courses in the technical occupations, the college is well-known in the CVT field and it takes part in many development projects nationally as well as internationally.

The quality project was started some years ago at Håndværkerskolen before the merger. The initial quality project aimed at developing a structure for a quality system adapted to a vocational college, including. to test the applicability of the ISO 9000 series. The college applied for and obtained a grant from the MoE.

After this initial phase, the now merged college decided to split up the projects in two separate projects. A project directed at quality development of the ordinary VET programme courses covered by law, and a project directed at "income-covered/user-paid" activities, typically CVT courses and innovation and development projects. In the second project an ISO 9000 certified quality management system was to be developed.

Why did the college go for an ISO 9000 certification? The college argues that the ISO 9000 standard has now spread to many different types of service companies, including. a number of public institutions. It seems natural that modern colleges and training centres should also talk about quality management and ISO 9000. At the EUC Syd they find that quality development and quality management should be formulated in a language and by way of a standard which can be easily identified by most of the EUC Syd´s partners in Denmark and abroad. The decision to concentrate on an external certification of its quality management system was based on the argument that an ISO 9001 certification would be seen as a positive signal by its partners proving that EUC Syd will never go for compromises, particularly not in the field of quality.

To manage the project a specific quality organisation was set up: a steering group consisting of the heads of education departments, the development manager and the newly appointed project/quality co-ordinator, who was given the task of managing the development work and the implementation within the existing organisation. Besides, the quality co-ordinator should perform the necessary monitoring (audits) and the maintenance of the quality system.

The quality project was started by establishing a number of working groups given the task of describing existing procedures and practices. Based on these descriptions, the first drafts of procedures and instructions were formulated.

At the same time a quality awareness course was created (20 lessons over 2 days) to prepare and motivate all employed at the college; everyone participated in the course, spread over one year, and each course had a broad representation covering the total employee profile of EUC Syd. Thus, the quality awareness courses became a forum for discussion where the various drafts of procedures and instructions were scrutinized once more. Furthermore, specific courses were established for those people who had been appointed to function as internal auditors.

The school management developed the quality policy and objectives as an integral part of the strategy of the college. Drafts of procedures and instructions were discussed with key persons in the organisation and thoroughly debated in the steering group, which said yes or no to a procedure and decided when a procedure would have to be implemented.

Hand in hand with the development of the quality system, and after a number of quality procedures had been implemented, the group of auditors started work. Eight internal auditors were appointed, and two-by-two they formed audit teams and were given the assignment to produce various materials themselves. Special meetings were held with the auditors whenever new procedures and changes in existing procedures were to be implemented. To keep the new system running, a number of short quality system courses were arranged to present new procedures to those employees directly involved but also to anyone else interested.

The whole process resulted in the formulation of a quality handbook/manual, in which all quality-creating activities undertaken were described and which was placed at the disposal of all the leading members of the organisation.

The last three months before the external audit took place could be described as an "examination period" for the whole college. The quality manual was carefully examined, including through an extra audit by external consultants.

The external auditing process took three days during which two assessors from the certifying organisation undertook a whole range of detailed tests and checks on the EUC Syd´s quality management system – on the management level, on a number of procedures and instructions – and documentation was required on how the college would cope with situations supposedly covered by its quality system. Each day was finished off with a meeting where the assessors accounted for the procedures having been tested, the documentation presented and the deviations which had been found. The following certification day opened with a meeting where the EUC Syd had the possibility of closing the deviation gap pointed out the day before if necessary documentation was ready.

The EUC Syd was then certified, and the ISO 9000 certificate could be issued – but only after an external audit of the certifying organisation had taken place.

The findings of the EUC Syd include:

- It is necessary for everyone employed at a college to be motivated to introduce a quality management system, and it is necessary that those affected by the system are involved in the development of the system from the very beginning. The quality assurance system must be founded on the normal pedagogical life existing within a college. The system must be built up in such a way that the chosen quality standard

(here the ISO 9000) is the flexible variable capable of matching the quality assurance system preferred by the college – and not the other way round.

- It is a time-consuming process to undertake an external certification procedure, but the structured and well-documented organisational development process has been of great value to the college. The focusing on own routines and habits has uncovered strong and weak aspects in the organisation and pointed out the points which must be incorporated in the future action plans of the college.
- The college wanted to apply a quality system well-known by its customers in the CVT market, to take a medicine taken by companies. The college finds that it can now document its activities in a better way and in a "language" spoken by companies (its customers) in the private sector. The result has been a much better management of the CVT training contracts so that the college can now document that the EUC Syd delivers what it has promised.
- The introduction of a quality management system based on the criteria of the ISO 9000 concept has led to greater coherence in the activities of the college. The process has implications throughout the whole organisation: the real decision-making channels have been uncovered, and employees have had to reflect on their own ways of doing things. Internal audit is seen as a good way to disseminate knowledge of one´s own organisation.
- Teachers are often dynamic and creative on their own terms, but do not always take as their point of departure corporate conditions of the college. It is argued that the traditional free choice of pedagogical methods, cherished by teachers, may make it necessary to use an external audit to ensure that the "production" of the college is documented correctly.
- The college is proud to have got a paper which documents that it has now established a quality assurance system which can withstand an external audit. The external auditing and certification is seen as an invaluable asset in relation to the co-operation partners which do not yet know the college. Besides, the external audit is the "carrot" required to get the last 5-10% of the necessary documentation of quality procedures in place.

4.2.4 Quality and recognition by branches of industry

Case: Onderwijscentrum Horeca; Zoetermeer (NL)

In this brochure we will not be dealing with the precise organisation of the Onderwijscentrum Horeca (Educational Centre for the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Sector). The centre was founded in 1945 by the social partners in the hotel, restaurant and catering (horeca) sector. This centre includes:

- the national body for vocational education and training in the horeca and tourism/recreational sectors which is jointly backed by the social partners and education. Legally, the tasks of this national body for sector-specific initial vocational education are (1) the development of the qualification structure, (2) external validation of examinations and (3) quality control and promotion of on-the-job learning;
- SVH examinations, responsible for the organisation and implementation of examinations;
- a number of other units, including a training fund.

The Onderwijscentrum Horeca decided not to confine its legal obligation to ensure quality assurance in initial vocational education to this educational domain, but to include the quality assurance of continuing vocational training in its core business.

Continuing vocational training includes (1) standard courses, usually for longer periods of time and (2) shorter courses undertaken during educational leave.

The Onderwijscentrum Horeca does not provide training facilities itself. These courses are provided as contract activities by private training organisations and by government-funded schools.

Quality assurance and quality control of continuing vocational training has been lodged in a system of accredited training institutions by the horeca sector. This accreditation is awarded after a quality diagnosis by an independent organisation (CEDEO). This organisation forms an audit team which examines the entire training organisation on the basis of a TQM model. In order to retain such an accreditation, two elements are, in principle, examined every year:

a. examination results, which, in an educational institution, may not be 10% lower than the national average;

b. participants' satisfaction: this satisfaction study is carried out by an independent research agency.

There are a number of advantages to the participation of schools and private training organisations in such a system of accredited training organisations:

- the training organisations are mentioned in the examination guide and course catalogues of the sector;
- accredited training organisations are mentioned in advertising campaigns of the sector (free publicity), and, equally importantly
- the sector reimburses 50% of the course fees if the course is completed successfully at an accredited training institution.

At present, there are about forty accredited horeca training organisations which:

- provide all activities for educational leave training available on the market. Accreditation is a prerequisite for funding by the branch of industry. Number of participants: 1500 to 2000 annually.
- control 70 to 80% of the training market for standard horeca courses. This includes all longer term training courses which culminate in a recognised SVH diploma, and a smaller percentage of the somewhat shorter, more specific training programmes. Number of examination candidates: around 6000 annually.

The system of accredited training organisations has now been operational for a number of years, with the following findings:

- the system contributes to the realisation of a transparent training provision which has traditionally been linked to sector-accredited diplomas;
- the system is not fully operational as the participant-satisfaction study has never been carried out;
- the element of the quality audit by CEDEO is probably too stringent. Accreditation only requires the execution of a modest activity in the school organisation (execution of horeca contract activity), while the entire school organisation is included in the quality audit.

In addition to quality assurance, the Onderwijscentrum Horeca facilitates the training organisations by the publication of educational material.

4.3 Cases with an emphasis on internal quality care

4.3.1 Quality and the ethic accountancy concept

Case: Næstved Handelsskole (Commercial College); (DK)

Næstved Handelsskole, which is located in the southern part of Sjælland, is a medium-sized commercial college which has seen a remarkable growth in the vocational courses provided and in its overall activities. During the last 10 years the number of teachers has doubled, so that the college now employs a staff of 130 full-time employees and 40 part-time employees. The college has a total number of around 1500 students (full-time equivalents).

The changing requirements of the college's different user groups (students, clients, customers, etc.), in combination with the rapid growth of the college, have induced the college to undertake a very comprehensive survey of the level of satisfaction experienced by interested parties towards the services provided by the college and towards its vocational courses – and of the level of satisfaction experienced by the employees of Næstved Handelsskole. An analysis of this type is sometimes called (at least it has been common in Denmark) "an ethical account". What an analysis along these lines does is to contrast the experiences of the clients of the college by holding these experiences up against the aims and objectives defined by the college.

What is meant by "the ethic accountancy concept"? This concept is (as far as we know) a genuinely Danish concept. It was originally invented to fill needs in firms which wanted to supplement their ordinary annual accountancy to the shareholders. It was claimed that shareholders should also be able to take more "soft" results into account. So management had to decide (or propose) goals on values, estime, reputation, the role played by the company in the local community, etc. Value statements are based on customers´ expressed expectations.

The concept was later been adapted by many vocational colleges, mostly in the commercial colleges in Denmark. Næstved Handelsskole is thus co-operating with 10 other Danish commercial colleges taking part in this project; these colleges share their results with each other. The school network, formed in 1992, applied for money and got a grant from the Ministry of Education as part of the overall quality programme.

As this concept has no standard, the outcomes differ widely, but all of them focus on goal documents expressing the value foundation of the institution as well as on customer-surveys as a means to evaluate how far from the goals the services delivered are felt to be. The methodology functions in the following way. Project-groups, including customers, prepare a value document for the enterprise concerned. This is then transformed into a kind of "value-budget" expressing more exact goals for a fixed period. Next comes the "value accounting" when the period is over. And finally "dialogue-circles" are established and given the task of proposing steps and means of improvement.

In 1989, Næstved Handelsskole started the process of defining its values and goals through a staff conference resulting in the plan, "Strategy 1990-92", later followed by a strategy plan for the period 1993-96. Here the overall values, aims and goals of the college are formulated, but also more specific goals related to the various programme courses.

The college (as is the case with the other nine commercial colleges also) has concentrated on developing a quality assurance system for the commercial youth-education

courses: the initial vocational education (HG) and the upper secondary vocational education (HHX).

The method of testing the level of user satisfaction was the following: three different questionnaires were devised which incorporate the formulated value foundation and the specific goals of the college in an operationalized form; the questionnaires were sent out to a) the students, b) their parents, and c) the relevant companies. The three surveys are all quantitative and based on the research technique of presenting statements which the respondent then gives points in a range between 1-10. The teacher survey is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and was undertaken by an external consultant.

The results of the surveys will be used in the continuing efforts to develop the quality of the teaching and learning processes taking place at the 10 commercial schools. The co-operative approach allows for comparative analysis of the conditions for success and failure in the provision of education at the 10 commercial colleges spread all over the country.

The findings of the Næstved Handelsskole include:

- The experimental approach of the "ethical accounting principle" can be used in a meaningful way in the vocational college field; it is possible to operationalize this concept and to contrast the tests of user satisfaction with the goals of a college.
- It has turned out to be a good idea to co-ordinate the quality assurance approaches between 10 commercial colleges. It is interesting to observe that the 10 colleges are so geographically far from one another that competition is more or less out of the question. The 10 colleges have profited from co-operating in a common project. When the results of the individual colleges have been produced, it will be possible for each college not only to measure its own performance against its own stated goals, but also to compare the results with corresponding data from other colleges.
- The applied strategy of undertaking a systematic measurement of a number of quality parameters – the reputation of the college, the satisfaction of customers, clients, users and teachers of the college – seems to function well, indicating that quality can in fact be measured based on "soft" variables on the output side (user satisfaction), and that such results can apparently be used by the colleges and contribute to improve specified indicators of quality.
- The innovative project of constructing "an ethical account" could contribute further to defining the overall set of values and the overall goals and objectives of the colleges, including the interplay between the college and its environment.
- The "10-colleges" project is still very young, and the results of its quality assurance efforts very preliminary. Based on the findings from Næstved Handelsskole the approach seems to be promising and worth following in the coming years. The limited scope of the first development phase, the ordinary VET programme courses for young people, will not allow any final judgement about the general applicability of the instruments used, but Næstved Handelsskole is convinced that the quality assurance strategy will turn out to be generally applicable at the college.
- It should be noted that the ethical accountancy principle always risks becoming an empty shell if the whole culture of the college is not geared towards the procedures involved, and if the employees are not fully motivated to take part in the formulation of and follow-up of values and goals. The college in Næstved works very hard to create this background of employee involvement and engagement.

4.3.2 Quality and indicators for results

Case: Institute for Vocational Education (NIBO), Nijmegen (NL)

The NIBO was established in 1990 after the merger of three schools for vocational education in health-care and welfare. It is a sectoral school. It offers programmes at six locations to approximately three thousand participants. In 1989, prior to the merger, one of the schools had started a quality project. The other two schools soon joined in, so that discussions – also within the context of the institutional merger – concentrated on increasing quality awareness and on reaching cultural consensus.

The NIBO opted for a method which it describes as a 'steering-participation model'. The project leader designed the concepts applied in the plan of approach, the scenario and worked out the details of the associated instruments. These were discussed intensively with people at management and middle management levels so that consensus was reached on objectives, minimum standards and action plans.

The scenario, which was completed in 1990, focused on five points.

a. The basic principles of quality care

The basic principles can be summarised as follows:

a1. The quality the educational institution wishes to offer is determined by what happens during the teaching/learning process in the classroom, during on-the-job training, and during student guidance and counselling. Conditions which either promote or hamper the optimum progress of the teaching/learning process are created at school and departmental levels.

a2. The people who determine these conditions should work continuously to improve these conditions; they should align their activities from an organisational-development perspective so that the definition of the term quality remains unambiguous.

b. A summary of the performance indicators and variables arranged within a number of aspects: (1) inflow, through-flow and outflow, (2) education provision, (3) curricula, (4) organization, (5) personnel, (6) facilities, (7) strategic policy of the school, (8) budget and (9) commercial contract activities.

   The performance indicators are put into operation in such a way that in most cases there are measurable key figures. The measurable results can be compared to the minimum standards.

c. The development of quality care at central and local levels in the school.

d. The organisation and the division of tasks related to quality assurance within the school. They opted to incorporate quality assurance in the school's normal policy cycle, so that information generated by the quality assurance activities could be used as management information to develop a new policy or to adjust the policy already in place.

e. A list of action points.

In 1993, this scenario was 'generalised' in co-operation with a number of other schools so that it could be utilised by all adult and vocational education schools (see Paragraph 3.2.3).

The scenario also provided for the publication of a self-evaluation report: the first appeared in late in 1992. All focal points and performance areas as well as 60 variables at the NIBO were examined. Among other things, the report dealt with the results of:

- a student poll (a type of satisfaction study);
- a lecturer poll;
- a poll conducted among former NIBO students;
- a poll on advancing to other forms of higher vocational education relevant to the NIBO;
- a national study into the various training programmes and curricula;
- a regional study into the demand for contract activities;
- reports compiled by the various training teams in the school in which a number of variables were dealt with.

Improvement actions can be determined, planned and executed on the basis of these results. This is done both centrally and decentrally for each vocational education and training programme or unit in the organisation.

The central management backs quality assurance and the final responsibility lies with them. The central project leader is in charge of co-ordination, the executive responsibility for the quality system as it is described in the 'Scenario for Systematic Internal Quality assurance', and for drawing up plans for unit-transcending quality activities.

The unit manager is responsible for the unit-based quality activities of each training programme. The units have a great deal of autonomy in deciding what the quality activities should encompass.

The developed quality model is a useful tool with which the interested parties can easily and systematically establish whether or not the school continues on the right track. The model poses four main questions:

- what level of quality does the school wish to achieve?
- in what way are the measurements carried out in order to determine whether the quality level has been achieved?
- which actions are undertaken if the standard is not achieved?
- who carries out which activities and when?

The NIBO states that by posing these questions "they prevent the ship from smashing itself to smithereens on the rocks while they are all checking to see whether the deck is clean enough".

The NIBO findings include:

- that developing and implementing a quality model is a complex, lengthy process;
- that it is vital to the success of the quality model that it is based on simplicity with regard to objectives, agreements, procedures, guidelines, and so on.
- that the quality assurance programme is supported and guided by the management so that a direct link can be established with the school's strategic policy;
- that there is no point in collecting data from students and lecturers unless everyone knows what the school intends doing with it.

4.3.3 Quality and establishing a culture of evaluation

Case: Handelsskolen i Randers (Randers Business College); (DK)

Randers Handelsskole is Denmark´s seventh largest commercial college offering a wide range of education programmes and courses in the initial vocational education area, but increasingly also CVT courses and further education programmes. Most of these are specialised courses with periods of industrial experience. At present Randers Handelsskole offers more such specialised courses than any other commercial college in Denmark. The college also has a lot of international activities, including an impressive experience with systems export to the CEEC countries around the Baltic Sea. The college employs a staff of 250 at four different locations in Randers, a town situated in the northern part of Jylland. The college is attended by 2000 full-time students and 1500 part-time students.

In 1991 Randers Handelsskole started its systematic work on creating a college culture of evaluation. After the implementation of the 1991 VET reform, the college felt a need to be more responsive to its students and its customers. The VET reform meant that:

- the vocational colleges won a greater local autonomy with a markedly greater autonomy in economic matters (the block release system), in the provision of VET and CVT courses, and in pedagogical matters;
- a much closer interaction with local and regional business life;
- a clear need to be able to document quality.

Randers Handelsskole decided to create a qualitative quality assurance system and more or less try to formulate its own approach (in co-operation with two other commercial colleges and assisted by a consultant from DEL). The "culture of evaluation" project started immediately after the reform.

To evaluate means, at least in this project, to register values and qualities in the different activities of the college organisation. From the very beginning, the project aimed at developing a system where evaluation might become an integrated part of the whole culture of the college organisation.

The process took off with a seminar organised as a "future workshop" where the basic values underlining the project – which would eventually form the common platform of the whole concept (the whole "culture") – were formulated jointly by school leaders and employees. The creation of a culture of evaluation must necessarily be based on the following values according to the experience of the college: openness, honesty, a willingness to change, awareness of quality, efficient communication and mutual trust. This process of an open, jointly undertaken formulation of the value foundation is the most important. These values must be respected unconditionally. The open process culture, instead of control, is of paramount importance as failures, redundancy and set-backs will often occur in the process of making evaluations.

The project has had as its central focus to reflect upon the basic question: What is quality? How can the concept of quality be made transparent? And how far must the college organisation change in order to open up for a consistent and permanent culture of evaluation?

The concrete working out of tools and instruments has taken place in separate phases of the project:

1. The analytical phase

During this phase thorough analysis of existing forms and methods of evaluation was undertaken in order to find a reconstructed basis for developing an evaluation concept. The focus was on defining and concretizing relevant concepts and elements of theories.

2. Identifying fields of activity

In this phase an initial identification and selection of specific areas for intervention was carried out. In the long listing of potential activity areas, the college found a broad outline of an all-embracing concept of evaluation. The college selected only some areas at the outset:

A) Systematic evaluation of the "Academy" courses,
B) User evaluation, and
C) A method for supervision of colleagues.

3. Implementation models

One of the main challenges when trying to establish a culture of evaluation is the question of staff attitudes. The college found out that it is required to make "contracts" with the teachers and always to state openly your intentions and keep your promises. Evaluation is always also a method of controlling and assessing the employees of a school. Consequently, to establish a culture of evaluation, requires a strong backing and even guarantees from the school management, who must clearly be willing to state the aims and frameworks of the evaluations undertaken. It was found out that the best way to start a process leading to an evaluation culture would be to concentrate much energy on constructing instruments for "grass-roots" level evaluations, at which the teachers themselves are responsible for making and assessing the results of various types of evaluations.

Since the start in 1991 the college has expanded its evaluation activities. The different evaluation principles are now published in an evaluation manual – which in fact is the embodiment of the evaluation culture concept – and which is tangible, can be changed and is familiar to all employees.

The findings of the Randers Handelsskole include:

- The culture of evaluation is a home-made concept which originated in a specific idea about evaluation and has gradually been transformed into a more or less self-invented concept based on a bottom-up approach.
- "Evaluation culture" is now encompassing well-defined parameters of quality and a battery of evaluation tools, and the concept has been disseminated throughout the commercial school world in recent years. Evaluation as an instrument in the quality assurance process has become one of the platforms of the Danish quality strategy.
- The college has been very active in pedagogical innovation and development work and has acquired a vast experience, particularly in coping with the organisational barriers confronting the initial phases of the evaluation process.
- Vocational teachers must be involved in the creation of a school culture. This requires that the foundation of shared values are always fully respected. Not until evaluations have been established in the school organisation, basically through grass-roots evaluations, can the next step of constructing an overall implementation plan be taken.

- The instrumentarium, the tool-box, of the "evaluation culture" cannot stand alone; other quality assurance instruments will also be necessary. But this focal point does not exclude the application of other more or less related quality assurance instruments, thus broadening of the basis of the concept.

4.3.4 Quality and Mission Statements

Case: Graafschap College; eastern Gelderland (NL)

The Graafschap College has a number of relatively autonomous organisational units: technical education, economic and administrative education, health-care and welfare education, apprenticeship learning; adult education, and course in continuing vocational training. The school has several locations in the east Gelderland region. Five hundred staff members are responsible for the education of approximately eight thousand students.

A number of years ago, the department of technical education started a quality assurance project. The reason was the accreditation of the 'integral quality assurance' contract activities/course. The ISO system, and particularly the description method, acted as a guideline within the project: manual, procedure book, work instruction book, appendices (book of examples). In another area, combating or reducing absenteeism, attempts were also made to take a systematic approach to the quality cycle which resulted in a procedure description to prevent this phenomenon. However, the results of these activities were not adequately supported by the organisation. They were linked too closely to specific individuals. As a result, when these people left, the projects came to a standstill. It was then decided to use a more systematic approach involving the entire school so that quality assurance did not amount to the sum of good intentions.

In December 1994, the Graafschap College started on the development and the entrenchment of quality care. They did not opt for one specific system: for instance, they used the ISO guidelines pertaining to the descriptions and documentation and the CEDEO method for auditing (see Paragraph 4.5).

During the early stages of the quality project, the school's mission received a great deal of attention. This was formulated in a strategic policy programme, in which seven mission statements are designated and described.

The Graafschap College wants to be:

- a school for the community and for society: an open school taking account of local developments;
- an encounter school: a school in which the values of solidarity, good manners, helpfulness and respect for the convictions of other are practised;
- a pedagogic school: a school in which care for the learning process is the guideline for all actions;
- a programmatic school, made-to-measure: a school which is able to offer every participant a made-to-measure programme which is aimed at achieving the envisaged qualifications.

In a more conditional context, this means that the Graafschap College wishes to be regarded as:

- a quality school whose quality is recognised by its environment;

- a team school: the College staff's main priority is to cooperate in the education and training of the participants;
- a budget school, thereby assuring its long-term existence.

In this way the school identified itself in seven ways.

The further definition of this characterisation took place in each department with regard to each of the mission statements. As a result, a large number of objectives were formulated and a time-table was worked out within which these objectives were to be achieved.

The quality assurance organisation is made up of two sections:

a. the quality team (steering group)

b. action or improvement teams

The chairman of the central board of management and the managers of the various departments form the steering group. This group is assisted and supported by a quality coordinator. The steering group is responsible for determining and aligning the various activities and for supporting the improvement teams. The members of the improvement teams are in any case trained in working within projects, interpersonal skills and teamwork, so that they are able to work on the solution of the various issues in an effective and disciplined manner. The departments have to find the financial resources within their own budgets to implement the quality activities.

The findings of the Graafschap College include:

- the fact that the start made at the end of 1994 and early in 1995 required greater powers of conviction and more energy than the previous one;
- that a quality project requires very meticulous communication within the school and thorough preparation by laying down the time-table and the content of the projects effectively: working on continuity in a manner that inspires confidence;
- the management's commitment and the close involvement of persons who are entrusted with executive tasks are essential to the success of a quality project;
- that the principle of 'unity in diversity' is significant, so that the communally supported understanding of quality can be implemented in a manner attuned to each specific department;
- that the school learned to carry out the correct activities in the correct manner through trial and error;
- that it will require a concerted effort if quality assurance of all actions as the basic principle is to be achieved throughout the school so that agreements can be formalised and the organisational management of activities are to become of lesser import in the quality project.

4.3.5 Quality and management by values and involvement of stakeholders

Case: EUC Midt, Viborg Technical College (DK)

EUC Midt is a medium-sized technical college in Jutland. The college employs a staff of about 200 people, of which the educational staff totals 130 vocational teachers. Initial vocational education is still clearly the most important activity, and the college offers

54 different courses and specialities. The college has around 750 students (full-time equivalents). EUC Midt is also increasingly involved in CVT courses as well as courses adapted to the needs of and sold directly to companies.

The college had a turbulent period at the time of the implementation of the VET reform in 1991. A new school director and a new college board started work in 1991. An analysis of the school culture indicated that the college had had a number of management problems, but also that the college possessed a very strong relationship with its stakeholders who found the quality level of services acceptable.

The employees wanted to decentralise as many activities as far as possible, and a broad school organisation development project was started in 1992. The basic philosophy of this project was to base the management of the college on the principles of steering by formulating and pursuing goals. The focus was put on staff development, the widening and deepening of competencies and added flexibility for all through the active involvement of all employed at the college.

The project has gradually turned into a quality development approach. The college found that the ISO concept was too heavily influenced by standards of industrial production of goods and consequently was too far away from the values and the cultural frameworks which dominate the world of education. The school logic and the contractual logic of industry were regarded as being too separate.

The college decided to start its quality assurance project from a principle which can best be described as management based on values and involvement. This philosophy takes as its point of departure the very core of what goes on in a school: teaching and learning processes involving living people. From pedagogical concepts and pedagogical activities methods may be developed which can optimize the quality of the learning environments found in a vocational college.

A college is seen as a social organism within which there is a complex technological, ecological and social network; the quality approach should find ways to develop this organic network. The quality concept involved is very preliminary and open; it gives all employed groups at the college optimal possibilities to participate in the shaping of the concept. The building bricks are mutual trust between management and employees, a shared set of values and a joint responsibility for running the organisation. This does not mean that power disappears as a steering mechanism, but instead that the conditions for using power have changed.

What does this mean for a quality care system? The EUC Midt argues that it is possible to develop a framework which gives daily and continuous improvements of quality by making transparent what you do and discussing whether this is good enough with the users (the stakeholders) of the college.

Creating a common understanding of shared values requires a process of shaping visions of the future. At EUC Midt the formulation of visions have been undertaken at two levels: the college level and the department level. The tools applied are for instance the so-called "future workshops".

At the college level, a picture of the future is made encompassing the vision, the values as well as the quality and business targets for the whole college. This work, which is normally taken by top-management, is at EUC Midt formulated by a "future group" formed by employees representing a cross-section (all segments and all levels represented) of the organisation. In this group the fundamental values, ideas and responsibilities are formulated, and the outcome is the working out of the strategy- and action-plan of the college.

At the department level a corresponding work is undertaken embracing the same elements, but with much more detail and with a more precise formulation of goals and actions. The last element in EUC Midt´s development and quality concept is the assessment of the quality of teaching through systematic evaluations combined with an evaluation of the services and products of the college by asking the external user-groups.

The experience of the EUC Midt has been that their quality strategy is time-consuming and takes many resources as it requires a planned and steered process involving in principle the whole college. The process follows the natural rhythm of the school year and thereby reportedly results in real-life progress. To start from the individual attitudes, aims and values of those employed by the college is seen as the optimal basis for organisational and quality development. The gradual team-building and the collective development of competencies for all employed are other important strands of the strategy. According to the college, they now claim to have established a culture of initiative at the school.

The EUC Midt findings include:

- The school management must be aware of how extremely stimulating the vision process is. Most college leaders are surprised to see the extent to which staff members are engaged in this work and how responsible they feel towards creating results afterwards. Taking part in the vision-shaping process creates great expectations. If the college management is not ready to fulfil the expectations, it should refrain from starting a vision process.
- It is of major importance that the college – school leaders and employees – agree on what is regarded as good and bad for human beings. Shared values about leadership, a good working life and the relations to the stakeholders of the college seem to be of the utmost importance. When employees have internalized the values of the college, they are more likely to be able to act quickly and in a co-ordinated way in unforeseen situations where standard procedures are not at hand. Employees do not have to ask permission before they act.
- The college would also like to invite the stakeholders to take part in the process of shaping visions in the future and to make their contribution to the revision and description of the shared values. Due to rapid changes of markets and preferences, it is important to channel signals from the user groups more efficiently into the organisation to allow for adaptations in the development orientation, the formulation of new objectives and the selection of indicators of quality among other things.
- It is generally agreed at the EUC Midt that the required willingness to take part in change processes as well as the competences needed to do so among employees in an educational institution can be most efficiently promoted by way of an organic school and quality development project where employees are influencing and share responsibility in the formulation of visions, strategies and goals of the institution.
- The quality concept developed by EUC Midt has been created as a reaction to and in a running dialogue with the "ISO 9000 concept", which is a well-known standard referring to a tradition in industrial management dealing with ways to organise production in a more cost-effective manner – and to a specific standardised methodological framework used to develop and certify quality assessment systems in a concrete way. The EUC Midt quality concept is a very "loose" definition based on an organic, internal bottom-up approach. A still-unsolved problem is how the college can assure the environment of the school, the external world, that its quality assurance system is relevant and good enough? Who sets the priorities? How can the college be sure that the outcome of the vision shaping process is more than just a combination of individual wishes and preferences?

4.3.6 Quality, an eclectic approach

Case: Twents MBO College, Hengelo (NL)

The Twents MBO College is a large school in the eastern part of The Netherlands. At present almost eleven thousand students receive education and training in full-time or part-time courses: introductory programmes and bridging courses, general adult education and Dutch as a second language, vocational education and training (technical, economic-administrative, health-care and welfare). The school has three locations in the three large cities in Twente: Almelo, Hengelo and Enschede.

In 1996, the Twents MBO College merged with a number of other schools and educational facilities, thereby creating a regional education and training centre in the eastern part of The Netherlands.

After working on a variety of national and regional improvement projects in a more or less ad hoc manner for years, it was decided at the end of 1994 to set up a quality project group which would develop a quality assurance policy and a quality model for the entire school. The point of departure was to formulate a policy with which to achieve an ongoing process of quality improvement. This policy vision was laid down in 1995, at the time when the framework of the new act had already become clear, thereby ensuring close alignment with the act. The quality policy was formulated on the basis of a number of important principles:

- an externally directed customer-oriented working method, in which a distinction is made between primary customers (students and their parents/guardians) and secondary customers (follow-up courses, business community, manpower services, municipalities, and so on);
- the products and services must comply with the requirements as laid down and expanded upon in the quality manual;
- the agreed quality must be perceivable and each employee must participate in the execution of the quality policy.

A steering party, which reports directly to the general director, is in charge of the organisation of the quality project.

The philosophy behind the TQM model, as applied by the EFQM, was used for the system of quality improvement.

The Twents MBO College quality model distinguishes between:

a. the primary process: information and recruitment, education and career guidance, intake, preparation and implementation of education and training within the school and the companies, assessment and examination, aftercare, etc.
b. facilitating processes, personnel management, financial and equipment management, organisation and management, education development.

All these processes were put into operation so that variables requiring quality attention could be mapped out. Then processes were selected which demanded attention at a particular point in time. Thus, the following projects are being executed in 1996:

- on behalf of the entire Twents MBO College: the implementation of a course follow-up system, the development of a student registration system as a management information tool, standardisation of all study manuals, and projects geared to improving communication, service to participants and the further elaboration of the didactic concept of education;

- quality audits were carried out in a number of units. The results of these four studies are to form the basis of improvement projects. The CEDEO procedure (see para. 4.2.4) was examined to establish whether it is an appropriate tool with which to gain insight into quality;
- a number of unit-based improvement projects.

In addition, the quality system is being shaped further and the quality manual is being worked out in greater detail.

The findings of the Twents MBO College quality project included that:

- raising the personnel's quality awareness is very time-consuming and that it requires the permanent attention of the management which must act as a role model.
- the quality policy must be embedded in the school's general policy;
- making additional (financial) resources available acts as an incentive. It acts as a 'booster' in the process of quality improvement;
- it is important to have clear criteria and performance objectives, as this simplifies feedback on the results of the quality study;
- creating a culture of self-examination and positive feedback acts as an incentive in a quality strategy;
- improvement projects can have an unforeseen effect on other parts of the organisation.

Although the Twents MBO College used the principles of the TQM model as a basis, a wide range of possible methods are also used. In that sense, the strategy can be described as being eclectic. They are attempting to build up a suitable set of instruments for quality assurance and quality improvement in a selective manner.

5. GENERAL REMARKS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Quality: a long-term issue

In The Netherlands, where the social partners have a less dominant role than in Denmark, the core mechanism in quality assurance is, according to the new 1995 Law, that vocational schools must have an internal quality programme and external visiting committees evaluating the schools every five or six years. Here a stronger external quality control can be identified.

The Danish VET system went through a radical reform in 1991 comparable to the one now being implemented in The Netherlands. With the strong role of the social partners in Denmark, a number of quality assurance instruments are organically built into the very fabric of the system. At all levels the social partners (and the companies) exert influence and should be seen as a part of the quality assessment system and the accounting of results.

Nevertheless, today this is far from sufficient. The role and function of the vocational colleges are in a situation of permanent change with continuous adjustments. Due to the more integrated role of VET colleges in modern society, the focus on quality is also a condition of life for these public institutions. It has become necessary to evaluate the efforts and outcomes of the public investment to be able to justify the consumption of resources and to promote your excellency in a still more competitive society.

More and more autonomy is given to the vocational colleges. They are seen not only as schools for young people training to become skilled workers, or as training institutions providing CVT courses for adults. In both countries, they are often required to become technology centres supporting the local and regional companies around them.

Danish and Dutch colleges have started the quality assurance process already. If one conclusion can be drawn from the case studies described in Chapter 4, it is that the systematic development of quality will take years and be a lengthy process in which the entire staff of the school has to be involved in caring for quality. In this context, the management's educational leadership and enthusiasm are essential to transcend the current level of quality assurance.

5.2 Quality and pedagogy

Based on the presentation of various Danish applications of quality models at the vocational schools, one can observe at least two different roads being taken at the moment. The one is to transform and 'translate" the well-known ISO 9000 apparatus into a standard to be used by schools. In many ways, the ISO standard has set the pace for all players in the field in Denmark.

The other approach is to make more or less home-made, self-invented concepts which are developed from existing pedagogical thinking and practices and then, based on bottom-up approaches, try to transform these into quality assurance concepts. The approaches are of a very democratic flavour, as they presuppose that all employed at the colleges take part in the definition process. The quality concepts in this category can be described as preliminary, pragmatic and pluralistic.

In The Netherlands top-down strategies seem to be more prevalent. In both countries the quality assurance systems which have been implemented have resulted in discussions

particularly focusing on organisational perspectives. Quality projects involve the organisation as a whole, based on a more or less holistic thought processes. Another focus is the fact that steps are taken systematically in the quality policy cycle, which allows for regular audits of the state of the art,which could also involve outsiders.

Quality assurance systems are instrumental in developing frames for administration, organisation and planning activities, but hitherto the attempts to qualify the teaching processes have been less convincing.

5.3 Converging of quality approaches

Since 1991 a "quality in VET" network has existed in Denmark, established by DEL, with representation from some of the colleges described in the case studies above. In this forum there has been a lively and sometimes heated discussion about the advantages, drawbacks, difficulties and experiences in relation to different approaches to quality assurance and quality development.

Those critical of the ISO 9000 concept often reject it with arguments such as: it is tayloristic, behaviouristic, mechanical, production-oriented and contrary to a humanistic perspective. Those in favour of using ISO 9000 also in pedagogical institutions answer: ISO 9000 is a neutral framework which defines specific requirements to documentation and assigns clear responsibility. The requirements, the values, the level of quality, the degree of stagnation or dynamics, which are to be put into the framework, are determined by the individual institution itself.

There is now an agreement that quality concepts are "empty shells", heaps of paper and a dead bureaucracy in itself. What is totally determining their success or failure is the strength of the motivation and enthusiasm which can be mobilised among the employees at all levels of the organisation.

It all started with sharp divergencies between the ISO 9000 supporters and the "human resource" supporters, but today the positions are much less polarized; instead, one listens, learns from others, tries to integrate the good elements from other concepts in one's own, etc. A considerable convergence of the different concepts has taken place.

In The Netherlands also, a clear trend towards convergence can be discerned as is demonstrated by

1) the utilisation of the selected methods and instruments and
2) searching for a balanced relationship between internal and external quality assurance.

In both countries this trend towards convergence is influenced by a number of factors:

a. the reforms of the vocational education and training systems which, as a result of deregulation, strongly emphasizes quality assurance, quality control and quality improvement.

b. the interaction between schools on setting up quality projects and the required resources. Here the governments act with the strategic regulating mechanisms of incentives: making additional funds available to all schools which want to participate in the development of a more coherent set of quality assurance instruments.

c. in The Netherlands the need for schools to clearly project and market themselves within the newly-created sector of the educational sector: the vocational education and adult education sector.

d. in Denmark the Ministry of Education has launched a quality strategy which has not yet had much influence on the activities at the colleges; instead, one could even speak of a situation where the many locally developed models have inspired the Ministry to formulate an overall framework. Around one-third of the vocational colleges have still not started serious work on quality assurance. They would be inclined to jump on the ESA band-wagon. But the basic philosophy in the Danish Ministry of Education is not to promote one specific quality assurance system.

e. the realisation that initial vocational education is a social task in which many, partially contradictory, needs must be met. Appropriate programmes must be offered to the students and the "graduate buyers" must be assured of future employees who are enduringly qualified and employable. Education customers must not be allowed to become the only kings of this sector. This too is an important aspect of quality assurance in initial vocational education.

An interesting observation from this comparative study of quality assurance systems in Denmark and The Netherlands is that convergence on a European scale can also be found. Thus, the Danish Ministry of Education has formulated frames of questions to be offered for use at all vocational schools directly inspired by corresponding Dutch material.

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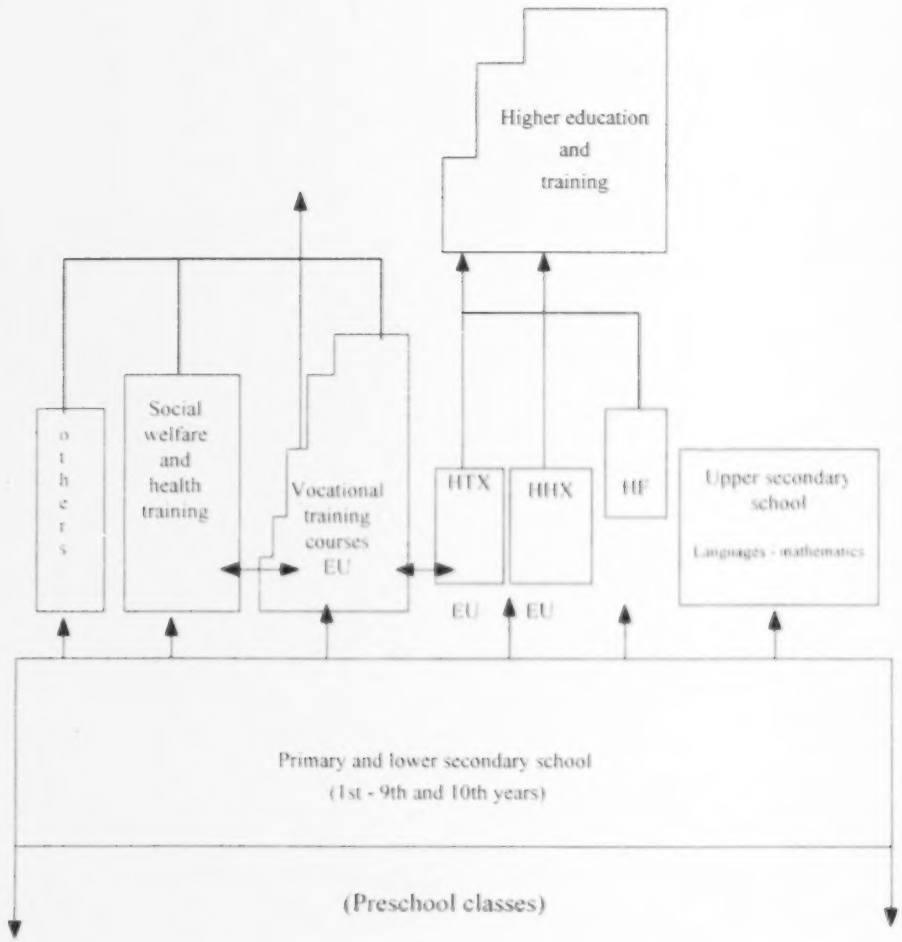
ANNEX

A. The Danish Education System

The Danish education system is described only in diagram form because as far as initial vocational education and training is concerned, no major changes have taken place. The reader is referred to CEDEFOP's monograph on the Danish system.

It should also be pointed out that DEL is currently revising for CEDEFOP the country vocational training system, which has since been thoroughly reformed.



HTX = Higher technical examination
HHX = Higher commerce examination
HF = Higher preparatory examination
EU = Vocational training

Source: Vocational education and training in Denmark.
CEDEFOP 1995

B. The Dutch Education System

Some more information is given in this annex about the Dutch system of VET, because the information in 'Vocational education and training in The Netherlands' (CEDEFOP, 1994) is out of date.

In The Netherlands, the broad field of vocational education and adult education is referred to as the BVE sector (beroepsonderwijs en volwasseneneducatie). It runs courses for a highly heterogenous group of participants. It is regulated by the Education and Vocational Education Act (WEB: Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs).

Senior Secondary Vocational Education

Senior secondary vocational education comprises courses for types of work within four sectors: the technical sector, the economic-administrative sector, the service and health-care sector and the agriculture sector. The individual courses vary in level and duration.

The **assistant vocational education course** prepares participants for simple operational work in an occupation. The course lasts no more than one year (approximately level 1, SEDOC).

The **basic vocational course** prepares participants for operational work. The course lasts two or three years (approximately European education level 2, SEDOC).

The **advanced vocational education course** prepares participants to work fully independently. The course lasts three or four years (approximately European education level 3, SEDOC).

The **middle-management course** is designed to train participants to be able to function fully independently and qualify them for all kinds of work. The course usually lasts four years (approximately European education level 4, SEDOC). Graduates can move on to higher vocational education.

The **specialist training course** is open to graduates from the advanced vocational education course. The course lasts one or two years (approximately European education level 4, SEDOC).

Senior secondary vocational education is open to pupils who have usually completed the first phase of secondary education. Graduates can move on either horizontally or vertically. Courses in senior vocational education are run by regional training centres (ROCs), agriculture training centres (AOCs) and labour organizations. Instututes not funded by the government can also run courses in senior secondary vocational education. The courses are designed by employer and employee organizations and the educational establishment, which are represented on the national vocational education bodies.

The courses are designed along two educational tracks:

The **dual track:** at least 60% of the course is spent in occupational practice. This is a dual programme (the apprenticeship system).

The **non-dual track:** at least 20% and no more than 60% of the course is spent on training in occupational practice.

The regional training centres (ROCs) also offer courses in general and vocational adult education.

General Adult Education

There are two main forms of general adult education:

Basic education comprises activities designed to qualify adults to function in both their personal and social lives. Dutch as a second language is part of this form.

Adult general secondary education (VAVO) is the part-time form of junior and senior general secondary education and pre-university education.

General adult education also has facilities for non-formal education and development work with activities of varying durations and levels.

Vocational courses/training for adults

Vocational courses for adults, which is sometimes referred to as schooling, focuses on three categories of participants:

Job-seekers

Training of job-seekers is largely the responsibility of the Centres for Vocational Guidance and Training (which prepare people for the job market), the Vocational Training Centres (retraining courses of an initial training nature) and the Women's Training Centres, which cater for women re-entering employment. Job-seekers can also attend courses in senior secondary vocational education and in the private training circuit of institutes not funded by the government.

Entrepreneurs

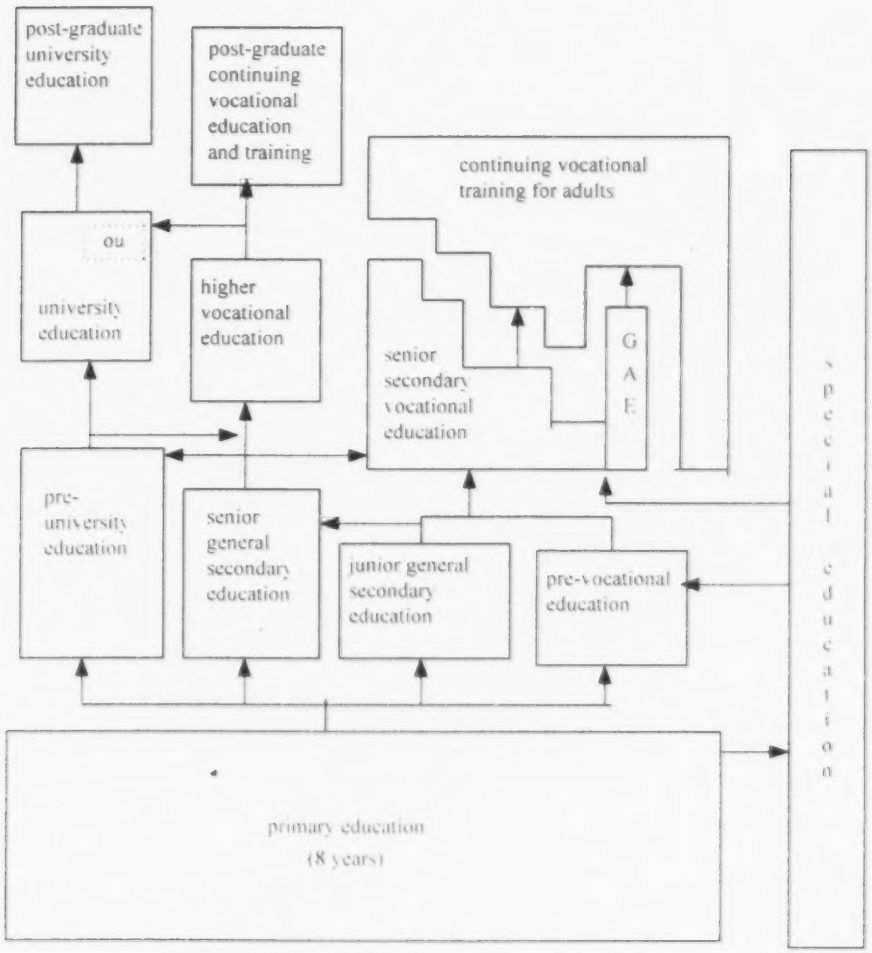
Short courses for (aspiring) entrepreneurs prepare them for effective performance of their entrepreneurial activities. Admission to this form of education requires at least a previous qualification at pre-vocational education level.

Employees

There are various forms of training open to employees:

- The part-time equivalents of regular government-funded education: part-time senior secondary and part-time higher vocational education,
- The two educational tracks of senior secondary vocational education,
- Private correspondence courses, which are primarily vocational in nature,
- Private oral education, which again comprises primarily vocational courses,
- Training courses given outside the company,
- In-company training, off-the-job and on-the-job.

The Netherlands



GAE = General Adult Education

CEDEFOP — European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Quality debate in initial vocational education
School-based quality measures at intermediate level: a Danish-Dutch comparison

Søren P. Nielsen (DEL), Karel Visser (CINOP),
Mari van Beers (CINOP), Erik Børrild (DEL),
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